

Future Teachers, Future Perspectives  
The Story of English in Kuwait

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## **Abstract**

In Kuwait, the English language is increasingly gaining importance signifying globalisation and internationalisation of the local culture and linguistic environment. Alongside the positive effects of the wide-spread usage of English there are negative tendencies which emerge onto the scene. This thesis is concerned with the educational aspects of such influences where it explored trainee teachers' conceptualisations of English as an international / global language, and examined the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation in light of the most recent methodological trends such as global English delivery, expansion of teacher knowledge base, the introduction of linguistic rights and instructional policies to educational stakeholders, and the merging of language and culture in English language teaching. Through questionnaires and in-depth interviews the study found that the relationship between the local and global in Kuwait is a complex issue with social, educational and political implications. Multiple functions for English and its status within the local context were voiced and consequently alternative futures for Standard Arabic as the main source and medium of local literacy and language of academia against the background of rapid Anglicisation emerged. The results may attract the attention of Kuwait's educational theorists and practitioners, and the hopeful outcome would be to inspire teachers to engage in critical thinking and challenge their realities; and encourage Kuwait's educational policy makers to find a balance between the source and target languages/cultures, as well as bring to the foreground local expertise and knowledge.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CBE: College of Basic Education

ELF: English as a Lingua Franca

ELT: English Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

GE: Global English

KU: Kuwait University

PAAET: Public Authority for Applied Education and Training

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

## **Chapter One: The Problem**

The complex phenomenon of English language teaching (ELT) can no longer be understood without taking into consideration the context of globalisation and corresponding discourse on the issue of Global English (GE). As a language English is rapidly gaining ground outside the inner circle of Anglophone countries, where it is used as a mother tongue and a backbone of culture. Since I live in Kuwait and have travelled a great deal to both the UK and USA in order to complete my postgraduate education, I have been in a position to observe the expansion of English language and culture globally. I have witnessed first-hand how the UK and USA have become melting pots of many nationalities, all striving to learn how to speak English. Therein, the global role of English today is being redefined via new media communications, language education, and language policy-making. As will be explored in Chapters 2 and 3, the quality of ELT, both worldwide and in Kuwait, is being seriously impacted by the current global reinvention of the role of the English language.

One important aspect of this evolution is the quality of professional English language teacher training in the outer and expanding socio-linguistic belts of the English language circle (Kachru, 1990; Kachru & Nelson, 2001). As Pennycook (2001b) has lamented, “English language teachers...have been poorly served by a body of knowledge that fails to address the cultural and political implications of the spread of English” (p. 86). My experience as an English language instructor at one of the largest colleges in Kuwait allows me to support the abovementioned criticism. Being charged with the responsibility to prepare trainee teachers to effectively teach the English language within Kuwait’s educational context, I feel that the current ELT curriculum framework fails to equip both teachers and trainees with adequate learning opportunities to survive in the age of globalization. The current poorly designed professional training

curricula which overlooks links between the global and local, non-Anglophone contexts, can be observed not only in Kuwait but in other Arab countries as well.

Syed (2003) has described multiple factors that complicate the professional training of English language teachers across the Gulf region. These factors include overly conservative teaching methods, outdated learning environments, shortage of instructors, and lack of support from authorities, who fail to establish a balance between the pro-Anglicisation educational ideology and anti-English students' motivation. Al-Hazmi (2003) has narrowed the focus to Saudi Arabia where teachers' training curricula cannot meet the needs of the existing sociocultural environment. In response to this problem, Karmani (2005) has recommended to reinforce the strategy and tactics of English language teaching in the region, so as to preserve the local orientation. From Karmani's viewpoint, it is necessary to carefully mould the generation of bilingual Arabic-English speaking educators who will contribute to language policy-making.

Furthermore, valuable suggestions concerning the improvement of the educational status quo in the Arab world are provided also in the books edited by Abi-Mershed (2010) as well as Mazawi and Sultana (2010). For example, Abi-Mershed has stated: "In the current context of globalization, inequalities between the Western 'producers' of modern knowledge and its local 'consumers' in the Arab world threaten to overwrite the region's own forms of knowledge and its rich intellectual traditions" (2010, p. 4). In full support of this claim, I wanted my research to benefit from the work and writings of Arab scholars on the issues of GE, language, and culture; and instructional policies outside the inner circle. I also feel that, the abovementioned concerns should lead to a set of guidelines which pertain to the promotion of local systems of knowledge and the engagement of various stakeholders in educational planning.

Given my experience in the teaching profession, I am aware that a successful marriage of the English and Arab cultures within the global context cannot be obtained without qualified and knowledgeable language teachers. Describing the goals of teacher training, Ramanathan (2002) has stressed that the introduction of a broad range of related disciplines and their diligent delivery do not predict the success of a professional curriculum. Ramanathan emphasises the importance of a “meta-awareness” – “a heightened awareness of how [teachers’] thinking evolves as they are being socialized into their disciplines” (p. 2). I support Ramanathan’s assertions, even on a personal level, whereas through the exercise of pursuing and producing this research my critical thinking skills have evolved and matured. Judging from that experience, I believe that engaging in and nurturing critical thinking skills may add value to teacher training courses and enrich the experiences of the trainee teachers and help them grow into responsible, confident and productive future teachers.

Many researchers (Almodaires, 2009; Al-Sharaf, 2006; Burney & Mohammad, 2002) have observed the narrowness and rigidity of Kuwait’s national ELT curriculum as being directly associated with poor levels of professional teacher training. Fortunately, a wide array of instruments have recently been developed to improve the situation. Some of the most important concepts to mediate the ELT crisis will be discussed in Chapter 3, in combination with multiple references showing that contemporary ELT pedagogy is reviewing its conceptual and methodological base. There is a choir of researchers that not only denunciate old methods and approaches, but also suggest new ones. For example, one proposition is to expand the concept of language in ELT so as to make use of its ideological and cultural values. As Canagarajah (2006a) has stressed, there is an urgency to arrive at an understanding of language “as social practice” (p. 234) that is pragmatically valuable and effect-oriented.

Additionally, the 'teacher knowledge base' idea has been enriched so as to encompass "the critical areas of knowledge" (Yates and Muchisky, 2003, p.135), the important elements of professionalism obtained through continuous learning and practice. This concept complements the traditional tripartite system of contents, methods, and professional ethics with a new critical agenda, "the teacher's view(s) of what language education is about and what he/she considers teaching to be" (Troudi, 2005, p.118). I consider it to be my personal and professional duty to become an agent of change by using action-oriented, conscious, and effective ideologies in the training of my English language trainee teachers.

These issues are particularly acute for me as a practitioner emerging from a diverse educational background. My early schooling began in the private system. I then majored in English language and literature during university and went on to complete my post-graduate studies abroad. Currently, I live in Kuwait within a culturally diverse home environment. Many of my immediate family members, close relatives, and friends are of mixed backgrounds and nationalities, where everyone speaks at least two, and in some cases three or even four languages. Being bilingual and bicultural, where we are able to freely switch between several linguistic means and cultural contexts, I feel that my life-world consists of multiple linguistic-cultural realities, each one unique and precious. Because of this diverse personal background, I am aware of the importance of learning to live with, and within, diversity without losing the true essence of each source. Holliday (2005) recommends to "see each other as individuals who are culturally constructed in complex ways rather than as bound by stereotypes" (p. 174). To accomplish this goal, linguistic and cultural diversity training should be put to the foreground of contemporary teacher training.

In the field of education, there is a modest corpus of research on the complications of TESOL teachers' training specifically in Kuwait. The lack of studies on the point arouses burning questions. To list a few, what makes a Kuwaiti English language educator successful in the age of globalization? Is it enough for the national teaching workforce to rely on approved teaching methods and learning resources to consider itself capable of moulding future generations and facilitating Kuwait's integration into the present challenges of the GE world? How do local teacher training programmes tailored for TESOL non-Anglophone educators respond to GE challenges? How well are the country's teaching cadres prepared to deal with the complexity of their sociolinguistic environment? These questions intrigued me as an individual, as a researcher, and as a practicing teacher.

### **Study Rationale**

The purpose of this three-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to explore participant views in regards to their conceptualisation of the phenomena of English and their professional training experiences. The first phase involved compiling a pilot questionnaire which was then administered to trainee teachers at the English department at the College of Basic Education (CBE) at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Trainee teachers' responses helped to improve the quality and content of the questionnaire instrument. In the second phase, the revised survey was given to another group from CBE and also to a pool of trainee teachers from Kuwait University (KU), Faculty of Education (CBE and KU are the sole institutions in Kuwait which are responsible for preparing the English teacher workforce). Survey forms were then processed quantitatively using SPSS software to identify major attitudes of respondents to English as a global language. In the third phase, qualitative interviews were used to elicit deeper conceptualisations of the phenomena under research from both trainee teachers and lecturers at the above mentioned educational institutions.

The present study may be called futuristic due to the fact that through the process of conducting this research I was able to track a developmental scenario for the national system of teachers' preparation. As Adoni (1984) indicates, this format of investigation does not intend "to predict the future", but is usually employed "to identify and assess possible alternative futures and to examine their implications for different areas of social action" (p.142). This is a valuable method to track critical areas before they turn into disaster (Schwartz, Tiege and Harman, 1977, in Van Avery 1980), to predict the policy dynamics intuitively as relying on expertise rather than on commentary (Helmer, 1978), and to trace the effects of policies on institutions and educational systems, by comparing specific cases of policy making and analysing possible consequences (Heck, 2004).

Far from putting forward univocal predictive statements, the present study rather looks more closely at the current situation with preparation of the English language teaching workforce in Kuwait to locate critical areas, positive and negative tendencies, and policies in the sphere of interest so as to understand in what direction the two teacher training programmes (CBE and KU) are heading. By 'problematizing' the narrow points, posing critical questions and avoiding a utopian vision, it is hoped to obtain an array of ethically grounded, "preferred futures" (Pennycook, 2001a, p. 9), or the wanted models of development.

The aim of the investigation will be addressed by listening to the voices of Kuwaitis who are currently undergoing professional training for English Language Teaching. Reasons for selecting young Kuwaiti English language trainee teachers as research participants are the following:

1. Young trainee teachers represent the generation that will live and work in the future; they constitute an active force for change.

2. The concepts, ideas, values, and methods that are related to teacher knowledge are fresh in the minds of young educators, who have just graduated (Reynolds, Tannenbaum and Rosenfeld, 1992). Lacking practical experience, they are not affected by stereotypes and the fatigue of the daily professional routine; they are likely to think originally about ways of applying theories and practices as they navigate continually changing settings.
3. Troudi (2007) states “Teachers are often excluded from educational policy making and play an insignificant role in decision-making” (p.6). In Kuwait, decisions pertaining to education are mostly formed by academicians and policy-makers, who call for re-organising and re-structuring the national system of teacher preparation in terms of accountability, curriculum, learning resources and various other factors. The current top-down perspective, used by investigators who are not currently employed as teachers, present a ‘disinterested’ (Lather, 2004) or objectified knowledge. It is important to give voice to teachers who are getting prepared to work in a real-life environment, and not only to theorists, who are far from the field (Freeman and Johnson, 1998).
4. Where this study is visionary, young trainee teachers’ views can help inform and guide the future. Moreover, involving them in strategizing for the future of their field adds an opportunity for critical thinking into their training, as well as a hands-on understanding of the evolution of global multilingual linguistics and pedagogies.

This study reviews the status quo of English language teacher preparation in Kuwait to present the weak and strong points of the education policy in Kuwait. Judged from the present state of affairs, the latter’s outcomes in the near future are challenging (Bowman, 2008; El-Dib, 2004; Gonzales et al., 2008; Wiseman and Alromi 2003). Currently, Kuwaitis face the necessity of learning English from kindergarten, and indulging in it during their university years. What are the projected consequences of



such an ambiguous context, with Arabic-speaking youth pressured to use English as tool of communication and learning from a tender age, and threatening their right to be educated in their own language? When entering college, such students often feel torn between the linguistic environment of the local community and the academic context (Troudi, 2007). A ‘bifurcated’ situation continues to dominate the higher education field, where culturally or locally oriented content is delivered in Arabic, while technologically or commercially relevant subjects are presented in English (Malallah, 2000).

One possible result from the present policy which is shifting toward “subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, p. 55), especially in the realm of tertiary education, is the marginalization of Arabic, particularly as a language of academia (Al-Askari, 2002; Al-Hazari, 2003). This may well result in Kuwaitis alternating between English and Arabic, depending on the linguistic situations “whereby English is associated with business, modernity and internationalism and Arabic is associated with religion tradition and localism” (Clarke, 2007, p. 584). Another scenario suggests a completely new mode of language usage, in which the boundaries between Arabic and English will depart from the very concepts of ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ or ‘foreign’ languages (e.g., Canagarajah, 2006a, b).

It would be naïve and unrealistic to call for complete abandonment of English as a media for communication and learning in the Arabic speaking context. It would also be unwise to unquestionably accept the dominance of English without assessing the potential negative consequences to Arabic. What is needed is that the professional community of Kuwaiti English language teachers to practice the appropriation of English, as Canagarajah (1999, 2006a) indicates, and be involved in adjusting academic discourses and applying a pragmatic lens to the English language practices.

The present research is not an attempt to design a precise prediction for the future of ELT in Kuwait. It is rather an effort to identify critical areas as viewed by perspective teachers, and to stimulate future educators to enter the debate concerning the role of English and the quality of their own teacher training. One method of resolving the problem in Kuwait is not by merely answering emerging questions, but rather by being aware of the issue. The goal of the current investigation is to prepare the ground for Kuwaiti teachers to think purposefully of their current and future teaching contexts.

The experience derived from attempts to change the linguistic situation in other countries (Al-Misidi, 2008; Asfoor, 2008; Troudi, 2007) have shown that the poorest strategy is to blindly follow the deliberate ‘globalisation’ movement. It is important to take care in gradually sewing together native and foreign languages without losing the uniqueness of each, and it is even more important to raise a generation of language-aware people, and this cannot be done without educating critically-minded teachers. The present research is intended as an early contribution to the foundation of this long-term process.

### **Significance, Aims, and Research Questions**

The main objective of the present research is to gather information from current trainee teachers (Kuwait’s future ELT teachers) about their perceptions of the English language generally and the implications of current views of English on their teacher preparation. These topics as observed in Kuwait remain unaddressed in the contemporary literature. No studies were found on the future perspectives of ELT as conceptualised by Kuwait’s new generation of teachers, nor on the nature of current English training programmes within the themes of globalization, imperialism and linguistic rights.

General research has been carried out by language-learning theorists on the development of methodologies for teaching English in a flexible learning and cultural environment (Canagarajah, 2006a; Kachru, & Nelson, 2001). The focus has been on evaluating training programmes, lesson plans, and exercises for developing specific language skills. Although English is acknowledged as an international phenomenon, most research investigates the situation of non-Arab countries (Bruthiaux, 2002; Nunan, 2003). Attitudes to English and language varieties have been studied in Kuwait (Mohammad, 2008; Akbar, 2007), but with an emphasis on the present rather than the tomorrow. Furthermore, the existing investigations pertaining to Kuwait primarily discussed either the difficulties encountered by English teachers and students in schools, or were concerned with curriculum evaluations (Darwish, 2006; Al-Edwani, 2005).

In the current research I investigated how the argument on English language expansion, globalisation, language policy, and teacher knowledge is assessed, and digested by the new generation of English language teachers in Kuwait. The aim is to bring a personal voice to research on ELT in Arab-speaking, and particularly Kuwaiti, settings. The latter context is controversial in regards to the general attitude towards English as a communication means and socio-cultural phenomenon. The importance of English is widely appraised by Kuwaitis who wish to keep up with the international trade community. There is a need to recognize what helps, or what hinders, Kuwaiti citizens, if they are to be forced into a world of English language dominance, to preserve their national integrity and simultaneously function in the post-modern global environment.

In this study, I attempt to avoid generalizations and rather build a situation-oriented prognosis aimed at assisting the growing Kuwaiti generation to (1) cope with the problems of socio-linguistic complexity; (2) to successfully mediate global and national interests; (3) to communicate freely in English for various purposes while being

aware of the integral national identity, and (4) use contemporary research and epistemological paradigms critically as tools for self-refinement.

The following two questions are addressed:

1. How is English perceived by Kuwait's future English language teachers?
2. What do the participants see as the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation?

This study would be of interest to those who are concerned with research of English-language teaching in non-Anglophone, Arab-speaking settings.

### **Organisation of the Study**

Chapter One – sets the stage with the problem, the formulation of the rationale, and concludes with the significance, aims and research questions. Chapter Two – depicts the Kuwaiti context, in terms of English language, education and policy.

Chapter Three – provides a review of relevant literature on the key concepts: The English language, language policy, teacher knowledge, and critical ELT which shapes the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Four – presents the methodology, data collection methods, participants, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter Five – presents an analysis of the data, reports and discusses the findings.

Chapter Six – puts forward the conclusions, implications and recommendations.

## **Chapter Two: Research Context**

The general aim of this chapter is to provide insight into Kuwait's social and educational context in order to present the main elements of English language teaching in the country. This chapter consists of the following sections: In the first section, an overview of the state's history is given with an emphasis on factors stimulating the emergence of ELT. The second and third sections present the local education system in the context of its historical development, and the fourth section analyses ELT at various instructional stages. The fifth section discusses the preparation of teachers. In the sixth section, the challenges of English language instruction are presented; and the last section describes the current situation in regards to ELT in Kuwait.

### **Global Comes to Kuwait – Kuwait Goes Global**

Kuwait is one of the smallest countries in the world founded in the early eighteenth century by nomadic settlers from central Arabia who were escaping a massive drought in their homeland. Driven by their need to survive, the settlers began to move quickly from the desert, known for its scarce resources, towards the Arabian Gulf. This diversion from massively arid localities to the sea was the cornerstone for Kuwait's existence in relation to the rest of the world. Taking advantage of the resources at hand, these first Kuwaitis mastered fishing and then began diving into the depths of the sea in search of a more rewarding source of income – the pearl. In spite of the danger and difficulty, pearl diving soon became the main resource in Kuwait's economy. This primitive industry resulted in the expansion of other trades such as shipbuilding and maritime transportation which brought the country into direct contact with not only nearby countries like Yemen, Iraq and Iran but also India and as far away as Africa.

The trade industry flourished and Kuwait quickly became a major trading center between India and Europe. This activity led to close encounters with different cultures,

communities and inevitably languages. With a heightened awareness of the importance of communication in business and commerce, monolingual Arabic speakers residing in Kuwait made an effort to learn several languages as a lingua franca, including Urdu and Swahili to improve their understanding of Indian and African traders. The outcomes of this economic transformation and language diversification become more apparent when applied to the more contemporary context.

A former protectorate of the Ottoman Empire and subsequently of Great Britain – finally gaining independence in 1961 – Kuwait has enjoyed rapid growth and prosperity since the late 1930s, when what proved to be one of the world's richest oil deposits was discovered there. Burney and Mohammed (2002) have called Kuwait unusual in terms of wealth that emerged not long ago as directly related to oil development. Describing the phenomenon, the researchers have called oil “an exhaustible natural resource” being unable to serve the sole basis of national economy, and stressed that it “must gradually be replaced with greater dependence on skill-intensive production within and outside the petroleum sector” (Burney & Mohammed, 2002, p. 277). Since the 1960s, industrial diversification and international investments have become efficient alternatives for oil as the primary source of income. The bulk of the profits and revenues generated were geared towards the modernization of living conditions and education in Kuwait. With an economy that “serves the needs of the people without the need to benefit from them” (Al-Obaid, 2000, p. 10), Kuwaitis continue to enjoy a high per capita income, no taxes, and many social service benefits such as interest free housing loans, marriage grants, child allowances, free medical services and education at all levels. Reaping the fruits of such a policy, the majority can afford the luxury of travelling — going beyond the Gulf and Arab neighboring countries which resulted in international exposure.

The exposure to the world as a result of the wealth almost instantly placed Kuwait within the global context, bringing with it Western interests as well as a new set of work ethics and business ideologies; immigrants from various countries to work in the service sector; and an increase in the population, with expatriates exceeding the number of Kuwaiti nationals. According to the data from the Central Statistical office of Kuwait's government, the total country's population, as estimated in 2008, has reached 3,328,136 persons, of which only 1,038,598 are Kuwaitis (approximately 31%), and the remaining 2,289,538 persons are foreigners (Kuwait Government Online, 2010). The phenomenon can be explained by the rentier economy prevailing in the state. The 2003 Arab Human Development Report 'Building a knowledge society' explains this mode as the tendency "to import expertise from outside because this is a quick and easy resort" (UNDP, 2003, p. 9).

Despite its relatively recent industrial growth and development of international relations, Kuwait has experienced an emerging and competing dialogue between local and borrowed, national and international, culturally rooted and avant-garde manifests based on factors that have shaped the reality of the country. With mega malls adjacent to old souks, designer boutiques opposite local handcrafts shops, franchised restaurants and traditional "gahwas" coffeehouses – the local Kuwaiti consumer market became and remains a lucrative space for imports of not only tangible products, but also diversity, eclecticism, and heterogeneity. Those elements penetrate also into the cultural environment of the country which borrows many features from the global (especially Anglophone) community through popular sources of information processing and entertainment such as satellite TV and the internet.

Researching the United Arab Emirates which shares much in common with Kuwait in terms of transition into the global age, Findlow (2005) describes the situation as "an active juxtaposition of the global and the local, the indigenous and imported,

traditional and modern, idealistic and pragmatic” (p. 287). Meanwhile, Mahgoub (2004) depicts these competing phenomena by describing Kuwait as a country “rushing towards modernization without comprehending its drawbacks” (p. 280), thereby encapsulating the essence of the socio-economic and cultural re-organisation of Kuwait as striking for heterogeneity. The applicability of those observations is even more apparent when applied to Kuwait’s educational and, to be more precise, ELT context.

### **Education in Kuwait: A New Way to Communicate with the World**

Before addressing the issue of ELT, it is necessary to shed light on the fact that the history of education in Kuwait is closely related to the general socio-economic environment of the state. In the early 19th century, the learning process reflected the Kuwaiti lifestyle which was characteristically simple and basic – enveloped in traditional values and religious norms. As Al-Darwish (2006) noted, “Learning the Quran, mastering the language of the Quran (Arabic), observing the prayers, almsgiving, and other principles of Islam have always constituted important aims of the education system” (p. 69). Qur’anic schools known as *Kuttab*s were the main source of literacy, and were led by religious preachers called *Mullas* or *Mutawas*. Classical Arabic facilitated the learning process accompanied by elementary reading, writing, and simple calculations.

As Kuwait continued to expand its economic relationships through commerce and trade, merchants who travelled abroad deemed a more formal education to be necessary, as informal education alone was insufficient to fill their needs to read, write, and calculate. In late 1911, the informal education process ended as the Al-Mubarakiya school was established through donations from wealthy merchants. Then, the foundation of the Al-Ahmadiya school in 1920 reinforced the transformation of the local educational scene, when the schooling syllabus became more structured and modern curricula were introduced. Yet, at that time, education was still very much male dominated. Females remained illiterate primarily due to tribal traditions and religious



fallacies; their focus in regards to their contribution to society was based on the domestic sphere, especially during the absence of the men when at sea. Their role was in childbearing and rearing, cooking, cleaning, and preparing for the arrival of their fathers and husbands. The exceptions to this rule were the female offspring of wealthy merchants, who were sent by their fathers abroad to be educated in neighboring countries like Lebanon and Egypt.

According to Al-Edwani (2005), the government took full responsibility of education for two major reasons which were, 1. the development of oil deposits and, 2. the economic crisis of 1929-1936, when local entrepreneurs became unable to sponsor educational establishments. The Kuwaiti Council for Education was established in 1936 to consolidate intellectual and monetary assets within the public educational environment. This historical transition brought enormous change to the educational system – giving the opportunity for young girls to attend school for the first time with the opening of Al-Woustta. Lead by an ideology of ‘shared wealth’ and ‘fair distribution’, the government was keen on encouraging “the people to benefit from free education” (Al-Edwani, 2005, p. 23). Hence, it initiated the Compulsory Act, which became a law in 1965, making school attendance obligatory for all boys and girls from the age of six to fourteen. The issue of segregation of students by gender was approached more flexibly in private schools which became legitimized and supported by the government in 1967. Public schools instruction was provided for males and females separately, but the private institutions could choose to be either co-educational or segregated.

To explore the evolving role of English language teaching in Kuwait, Karmani (2005) has emphasised the special role of English as a language for specific purposes, as it is used in the oil-production industry – so-called “petroleum-English”. It cannot be denied that the discovery of oil has promoted both the formalisation of the schooling system and the status of English as a lingua franca. As Akbar (2007) explained, those

Kuwaitis who cooperated with British expatriates at multiple oil-producing sites had to study the foreign tongue to boost the development process and share expertise.

However, a close reading of Al-Yaseen (2000) reveals that English as a subject for learning in Kuwait existed prior to the oil boom of the 1930s. In the late 1910s, eight years prior to the opening of the Al-Mubarakiya institution, English classes were taught in local Kuwaiti school curricula, alongside geography, history, and mathematics.

Moreover, Al-Darwish (2006) has mentioned that English courses were taught at the American Medical Mission founded in 1913 to teach Kuwaitis English in order for them to be able to engage in business with merchants from India.

Analysing the reasons for English being such a popular and well-supported element of the Kuwaiti educational context not only currently, but also historically, I found the multi-factor perspective proposed by Al-Yaseen (2000) to be the most compelling. Al-Yaseen has suggested treating the high status assigned to English as resulting from the confluence of geographical, historical and political, and socio-economic factors. In regards to geographical factors, Kuwait enjoys a favoured position as a cross-centre of trading and communication routes both within the Gulf region and as a transportation gateway between the Middle East and Europe. So far as historical and political factors are concerned, Kuwait started playing an important role in English-medium merchant operations since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the headquarters of the British East India Company were established in the country's northern Gulf area. During the period of the British protectorate, which lasted from 1899 to 1961, English was heavily used as a medium of international affairs and administration. The long-lasting cultural relationships with Great Britain continued ever after the termination of the protection treaty. Kuwait's affiliation to the United Nations in 1963 also reinforced the position of English as the main foreign language in which the wishes and needs of Kuwait are communicated to the rest of the world. Associated economic issues that have

lent support and increased the popularity of the use of English by Kuwaitis that have already been mentioned include the expansion of the oil industry, travelling abroad, which has recently become affordable for more Kuwaitis, the proliferation of information technologies, and the globalisation of the national consumer market.

The goal of this section was to show that Kuwait has learnt to communicate with the world due to a number of factors, and the main medium chosen for the appropriate activities became English. The next sections trace the development of the local English-language teaching curricula and the link between the methodological transformations and the socio-political changes occurring in Kuwait, specifically, and in the world, generally.

### **Schools in Kuwait – English in Schools**

School education in Kuwait has three basic levels: elementary, intermediate, and secondary. In the past, each level was comprised of four years of study. However, in 2004-2005, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education initiated a move towards streamlining the formal education stages with those utilised in other Arabian Gulf countries. Education reforms aimed also at catering to the psychological and developmental needs of students. Resulting from those considerations, the traditional format changed to include five years of primary school, four years of intermediate school, and three years of secondary school. Pre-school, consisting of two years, has been left optional to parents, although strongly encouraged.

Prior to the Iraqi encroachment, English was taught beginning in the intermediate level and then for eight consecutive years thereafter. Exposure to the language varied from 45 to 60 minute classes, five to six times a week. Upon liberation, the level of Kuwaiti learners' mastery of the English language at the secondary and tertiary levels of schooling became a hot issue in public debates. Parents and educational authorities complained of students' inability to efficiently use English for

academic purposes, cited poor English testing results, and low achievement in written and oral English skills. In 1993, following heated debates in parliament and extensive deliberations by the Ministry of Education, Ministerial Decree 61/93 was passed, bringing the introduction of the English language in public schools to begin from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of primary school. Hence, total years of English language instruction has increased from eight years to twelve years throughout the pre-tertiary educational ladder. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) curriculum was borrowed as a methodological framework to present the four basic language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) to first graders and refine them continuously until students' graduation from secondary educational establishments. Later on, Kuwait's Ministry of Education implemented original syllabi designed specifically for Kuwait. The implementation began with the *Fun with English* series in 2002 for the elementary stage (years one to five) followed by the *Target English* series for the intermediate stage (years six to nine) in 2004. The full transition from the borrowed UAE curriculum was completed in 2009 with the *Over to You* series designed especially for the secondary stage (years ten to twelve). The intensity of English language instruction stayed the same as it had been, 45-60 minutes five days a week.

An almost identical English language teaching programme to the one described above is found at private government-funded Arabic schools. These schools are not fully sponsored by the Kuwaiti government; however, quite generous funding systems are in place for these institutions – in addition to land allotment for school construction and free textbook distribution. Following the criteria set by the Ministry of Education, which is practiced by public schools, private schools are gender-segregated, the medium of instruction is Arabic, and English is taught as a foreign language by Arab teachers.

With the 1990s came the expansion of the private schooling system that is managed by the Department of Private Education in the Ministry of Education, and

included the pre-tertiary establishments, the majority of which placed strong emphasis on English language teaching. An increase in English-speaking/bilingual private schools and a surge in Kuwaiti admittance reflected the Kuwaiti state of mind in relation to the political conditions. Statistics reveal that, before the 1990 Gulf war, only 15 non-Arabic foreign schools were registered in the country, and by 1997-98, the number increased up to 104, of which 42 delivered instruction according to non-Arabic curricula (Al-Mubailesh, 2010). The number of English-speaking/bilingual private schools since then has continued to grow, reaching a total of 98 international schools in 2009-10.

The most commonly cited motives for placing children in private schools are 1. better academic standards, 2. higher professionalism of teachers, and 3. extensive English-language learning (considered to be a pledge for more secure employment in the future). The large proportion of children studying in private establishments persists today, despite substantially high tuition fees. It is worth mentioning here that a significant number of Kuwaitis are enrolling their children in Pakistani and Indian schools, which operate in English and are deemed a less expensive alternative to other prestigious schools while still promoting an English-based education that is unavailable in the public sector.

Unlike the public schools, private, non-government funded schools enjoy a more independent structure. Although operating under the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, these establishments have the liberty to be co-educational, adopt the curriculum of their choice, and implement their preferred language of instruction. Nevertheless, all the schools are obliged to teach Arabic and Islamic studies to all Arab or Kuwaiti nationals in attendance. Moreover, the Kuwaiti government has implemented a strict scheme that all private schools must adhere to in terms of curriculum, contact hours, and exams in the subject areas of Arabic and Islamic studies.

Among the private schools, there is a difference between bilingual and international schools. Bilingual schools currently are instructed in Arabic/English following the Kuwaiti National curriculum, and, in some cases they adopt material from other Arabic speaking countries (i.e., Lebanon) to use alongside an English curriculum that is borrowed mainly from the UK, U.S. and/or Canada. In contrast, international schools follow the guidelines of their respective home countries. Armenian, Filipino, French, and Iranian schools, among others, are also available.

A separate type of school in the private educational sector is private English-Islamic schools, which cater to the new growing trend toward the preservation of local cultural values and heritage, as those entities are manifested through the Arabic language and the religion of Islam. These schools serve as a middle ground between Kuwaiti public schools, where Islamic studies are introduced on all levels on a compulsory basis, and private schools where secular subjects such as English, science, and mathematics are taught based on U.S. or British curricula. The most differentiating feature between English-Islamic schools and international private schools is segregation along gender lines where female and male students are instructed separately.

According to Alkandari (2009), the major aim of private schools which have a religious focus is “to reinforce through education both traditional cultural mores and religious beliefs” (p. 12). The accompanying goals are to establish a relationship of worship between the individual and their creator; to encourage students to mould his/her behaviour according to Islamic values; to work efficiently as a productive member of Muslim society; to establish the feeling and attitude of shared belonging to the Islamic world; and to maintain the relationships of equality according to Allah’s legacy. Although this type of schooling is considered as a recent phenomenon it is steadily growing and gaining recognition.

Moving on to higher education, institutions in Kuwait are also divided into public and private sectors. KU, established in 1966, is a public institution. It comprises ten colleges – arts, science, administrative science, law, engineering and petroleum, medicine, education, Shari’a and Islamic studies, social sciences, and dentistry. Arabic has always been the predominant medium of instruction both academically and administratively. However, the University took a bold step when it anglicized the colleges of science, engineering and petroleum, medicine and dentistry, and, more recently, the college of administrative science. Thus, students not only have to pass the English foreign language classes, but, for those subject areas, the medium of the textbooks, exams, and instruction is also English. Hence, students are required to acquire a level of English language skills strong enough for them to follow the programme, and grasp new ideas and technical information in English in order to graduate.

Another prominent public institution is PAAET, established in 1982 in response to the country’s main objective of developing Kuwaiti skills to meet the shortage in technical human resources that was created by the rapid industrial and economic development of that time. PAAET is comprised of four colleges and seven institutes. The colleges are basic education, business studies, technological studies, and health studies. The institutes include electricity and water, telecommunication and navigation, industrial training, nursing, constructional training, and vocational training. All courses at PAAET are administered in Arabic, using English for Specific Purposes in accordance with the field of study. In other words, English remains a foreign language and is taught as such. Similarly, other public higher education sectors including The Higher Institute for Theatre Arts and The Higher Institute for Music Arts continue to teach in Arabic and teach English as a foreign language.

In contrast to public institutions, private higher education institutions, which emerged in Kuwait in 2005 and currently number eleven universities and colleges, are generally affiliated with international institutions and use English as the medium of instruction both in and outside the classroom. Prominent private institutions include the American University of Kuwait, the Australian College of Kuwait, and the Gulf University for Science and Technology. These institutions enroll primarily Kuwaiti students; indeed, Kuwaiti students make up more than 70 percent of the total student body.

Keeping with higher education, the government of Kuwait provides several scholarship schemes through KU, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research. Qualified students are given the opportunity to pursue their undergraduate and/or graduate studies abroad. Studying in foreign countries has always been deemed a key to successful professional development. American universities are by far the most popular, followed by universities in Jordan and the United Kingdom (Ministry of Education, 2008).

### **Changing Times – Changing Methodologies**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, teaching English in Kuwait most commonly relied on the grammar-translation method. This method involves studying the language through the memorisation of grammar rules and vocabulary. Students synthesised grammatical forms in order to read and write texts in English. Learners were mainly engaged in translating passages from English into Arabic, the main language of instruction. During classroom time, teachers dominated the environment, requiring obedience and drilling students.

From the 1940s to 1960s, the grammar-translation method led to the audio-lingual method, providing instruction on several levels such as phonology, morphology, and syntax. Drilling was still used but was complemented by teacher pronunciation of



grammar structures and vocabulary. The audio-lingual method stressed dialogue as an effective tool of language learning; dialogue was conceptualised as the conscious and well-trained habit of using linguistic elements in a course of communication among participants of the instructional process.

By the 1970s, local educational authorities expressed dissatisfaction with both the grammar-translation method, which left out the important skills of oral communication, and the audio-lingual method, which constrained the fluency and true-to-life authenticity of foreign-language speech by suggesting unrealistic, fabricated topics in-classroom linguistic interactions. At this time, the communicative language teaching approach became popular.

Communicative teaching initially had been introduced in Kuwait as the notional-functional method of ELT which was implemented between the 1970s and 1990s, and treated language as a sequence of speech acts varying on function. Later, it was dropped due to being too narrow, although elements such as an emphasis on the skills of social intercourse remained in current Kuwaiti syllabi. In addition, the revised ELT curriculum implemented in Kuwait since 2002 has utilised a so-called ‘weak’ version of communicative language teaching. According to Howatt, the first scholar to identify it, this weak model is “learning to use English,” while the “strong” model is “using English to learn it” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In other words, Kuwaiti policy makers have compiled the national ELT curriculum so that, first of all, to equip a learner with a pre-defined set of language forms and skills and, only then, to have him/her use English for the sake of communication. The alternative would have oriented students towards developing an active knowledge of the English language in parallel with using it to communicate.

In the present day, the methodology of teaching English in Kuwait is marked with eclecticism. The current curriculum includes elements of each of the previous models of grammar-translation, the audio-lingual approach, and the communicative teaching

approach, with the goal of leading learners to use linguistic forms for multiple functions and meanings in the general flow of communication. Currently, English language instruction at local public schools is performed in accordance with the strategic goals of education in Kuwait (Ministry of Education, n. d. –b).

Within the framework of educational goals as determined by the Ministry of Education, students should achieve four language-learning goals during each school level. These are proficiency goals, cognitive goals, affective goals, and transfer goals. Proficiency goals pertain to the core macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Cognitive goals pertain to knowledge of the language and culture. Affective goals are aimed at arousing positive attitudes and feelings concerning the use of English per the view that a student who feels proficient in using English is a more self-confident learner. Finally, transfer goals guide the instructional procedure so that an individual would rely on specific language skills to react to emerging problems in learning. These objectives are supported by the stage-specific guidelines provided in curriculum documentation and textbooks being employed in the primary, intermediate, and secondary schools in Kuwait.

### **Primary, Intermediate, and Secondary Schools**

The primary stage of the broad objectives of the educational process in Kuwait is aimed at encouraging “pride in Islam, love and patriotism to Kuwait, appreciation of Arab values, traditions, and culture,” and establishing “correlation to other school subjects” (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a, p. 2). Although they do not refer to English language teaching specifically, EFL goals reveal the tone of local policy making and may shed light on its potential attitudes regarding the role of English as a foreign and global language as appropriate for enacting local interests.

According to the EFL goals document (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a), Young Kuwaitis studying at the primary stage are expected to acquire an array of macro- and

micro- skills. The listening, speaking, reading and writing skills range from basic expectations (i.e., recognizing English phonemes, counting from 1 to 100, differentiating between the shape of small and capital letters, realizing that English is written from left to right, etc.) to more complex skills (i.e., to speak genuine English, use authentic English, communicate accurately and effectively with confidence, etc.). Students are also expected to have achieved several cognitive, affective, and transfer goals.

Textbooks of The *Fun with English* series give detailed course descriptions in relation to every grade level, as well as the benchmarks expected to be achieved by the end of a given year. All five grades share almost identical English teaching approaches, strategies, and procedures. The “integrated” teaching process is practiced “to ensure that pupils learn to use English both fluently and accurately” (Hancock, 2007, p. IV). Games, songs, stories, and other activities encourage children to communicate in English from the very first day of teaching. The appropriateness of the integrated teaching approach becomes dubious, given the following concerns. The structural methodology is realised through the presentation-practice-production (PPP) model. In the primary stage, students “hear the language in its correct form” and then “imitate the models accurately” under the supervision of a teacher (Hancock, 2007, p. V). As Al-Darwish (2006) has acknowledged, the task is achieved through repetition in chorus, weakening the communicative and interactive messages expressed in the curriculum-planning documents.

Textbooks contain pictorial material with instructions intended to facilitate the development of oral skills. The choice of topics (e.g. Unit 10: Kuwait in the past, Allen & Iggulden, 2006) reveals a relationship between the target language (English) and students’ Kuwaiti Arab background. However, the cultural element of ELT is still partially missed in the primary stage since the country’s past is used to train children in the Simple Past Tense of the English language instead of establishing the link between Kuwait and the

Anglophone environment or present the idea of cultural and linguistic diversity to learners.

The intermediate stage has an added fifth goal of “communicative competence” (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a, p. 7) to the four general objectives of the primary stage. Learners are required to “use English as another means of communication effectively and confidently” (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a, p. 8). Requirements for “efficiency,” “confidence,” “correctness,” and “authenticity” reveal not only the mixture of approaches (audio-lingual and communicative) typical for the primary stage but also the orientation towards ‘native-speakerism’ (the issue will be discussed in details in the Literature Review and Discussion sections). At the intermediate stage, learners are encouraged to acquire more independence linguistically. For example, when reading the learners are stimulated not only to “[g]uess the meaning of some new vocabulary in context” (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a, p. 4), as they were on the primary level, but rather to “[l]ook up new words in a dictionary” (ibid., p. 10). In addition, the vocabulary also becomes more complex; -- where common verbs used in primary school vocabulary lists would be ‘guess,’ ‘comprehend,’ and ‘understand,’ while the typical choice for the intermediate level would be ‘summarise,’ ‘elicit,’ ‘differentiate,’ and ‘extract’. Mastery of more difficult vocabulary indicates progress in the complexity of language tasks, usage and patterns.

Intermediate students’ heightened potential under the new system is supported by an analysis of the textbooks that are currently being utilised in grades 6-9 which belong to *The Target English* series. The Intermediate textbooks form the logical continuation of the primary textbooks, complying with the syllabus designed by the Ministry of Education. The teachers’ handbooks for this series contain a special section covering developmental specifics of students at the intermediate stage of schooling:

As students move from primary to the intermediate stage, their development will increase dramatically in many ways. Students of this age are becoming far more independent and interested in the world about them, and will want to express their opinions and feelings in the process. At the same time, students also need constant support and reassurance. (Tomlin, 2007, p.ii)

Teachers encourage students to practice new language skills in both group and individual modes. The intermediate level of ELT allows for using a richer range of dialogue techniques, including role-playing, elementary drama playing, and ask-and-answer conversing. Oral tasks are enriched with translations and expanded dialogues on pre-set themes. Students are also taught to distinguish formal from informal speech patterns, requests from orders, and facts from opinions, along with elementary figures of speech. Regarding writing, students compile short letters, guided compositions, and summaries. This task is facilitated by ready-made writing models provided in the backs of students' books (see, for example, *Target English Student's Book* for grade 6A, Greet, 2007).

Compared with the primary-stage curriculum, the intermediate programme promotes self-confidence and self-motivation in learning English as linked to other school subjects. However, responses elicited from research participants have indicated that the planned relationship between English and other school subjects is either too salient or not recognised, complicating the students' usage of English in the local learning environment in subsequent stages of training.

ELT objectives at the secondary stage have two additional goals in the *EFL Goals* document (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a), “fluency and accuracy” and “self-learning” (p. 14). As in the primary and intermediate stages, the secondary school ELT methodology is distinctively eclectic in terms of approaches used. The range of functions suggested for practice include compliments, flattery, sarcasm, criticism, etc. Meanwhile,

the communicative approach is supported through an increased complexity of interactive tasks, encouraging learners to express their own viewpoints and emotions in both the oral and written modes, to explain various phenomena and situations or comment on them, to react appropriately to teachers' or peers' prompts, to participate actively in role-playing, and to share personal experiences. They are also assigned to decipher information organised in tables, schemes, graphs or drawings.

An expressed stimulation of students' deepening analytical skills complies with the general goals of the national education system. New learning resources in the *Over to You* (Haines, 2009) series promise to provide "plenty of opportunities [...] to develop critical thinking skills and express [one's] own opinion" (p.5) on a range of provided themes. In addition to demonstrating comprehension or answering questions when listening or reading texts, identifying the main and supporting ideas, compiling summaries or details, uncovering implied meanings, and commenting on the writer's point of view.

At this stage, students are encouraged to draft short essays, e-mails, compose application forms, write reports, and perform other writing projects. In terms of speaking skills, secondary school graduates behave as confident English language speakers and efficient social agents in English. This is in accordance with statements made in the *EFL Goals* document (Ministry of Education, n. d. –a) indicating that graduates should be able to:

- Initiate opening statements and questions to help determine appropriate action among people.
- Take roles implying an obligation and responsibility of individuals towards each other in a group. (p. 26)

The curriculum materials are created to support and develop all four language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing in an integrative manner. Stimulating

learners in their usage of various sources and types of data promotes self-learning and self-refinement. Students are exposed to various forms of speech and styles of texts in order to not simply mimic language features, but also consciously and creatively apply them in their own language constructions. In comparison to the earlier school stages, the secondary level curriculum entrusts students with a wider spectrum of opportunities for active decision making and problem solving in English.

### **Preparing Teachers to Meet Future Needs**

An established political makeover known as ‘Kuwaitization’ has been on the pinnacle of the country’s reform agenda for the past few decades. The rigorous plan, which the Kuwaiti government devised, has yielded huge results in both the private and public sectors. According to Lesko (2010), up until 1982, native Kuwaiti educators were the minority among all educators in Kuwait, with 1 Kuwaiti being employed for every 3.76 expatriates. By the late 1990s, the number of Kuwaiti teachers doubled, dependence on foreign professionals declined, and the ratio changed to 1.7 Kuwaitis for every 1 expatriate. However, this improved ratio did not reflect an improvement in the ‘Kuwaitization’ of the ELT force. Indeed, Kuwaiti teachers continue to make up less than 20 percent of the English language teaching force (Ministry of Education, 2008).

While there are still not enough Kuwaiti English language teachers, there is distinctive diversification among the English-language teaching cohort, according to the type of educational establishments. Public schools hire professionals mostly from the neighbouring Arab or multinational countries such as Egypt, India, Lebanon, and Syria; while private schools prefer to hire native English-language speakers from the inner-circle countries. The presence of British and American English language teachers makes private establishments more prestigious, and ensures, from the perspective of Kuwaiti parents, a higher standard of English language instruction (Mohammed, 2008).

Another issue worth discussing is the shortage of male teachers, a problem long faced by Kuwait. According to the 2005-2006 data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, almost 100% of teachers working in kindergartens were females, contrasting with approximately 13% male teachers at the primary level and 47% at the secondary level. At CBE, one of the two institutions in Kuwait that accepts only female students, female teachers also outnumber male teachers.

The shortage of male teachers, long seen as a problem in Kuwaiti schools, in more recent years, became acceptable, as a strategy has emerged to feminize the entire primary educational system in terms of teaching and administration. All boys' primary schools are to be run by female staff. Training courses are also to be offered exclusively for female teacher students. This decision drew huge opposition and controversy, but the Minister of Education at the time, Ms. Nooriya Al Sabeeh, decided to continue with the move. Thus, the concentration on female-only education prevails, which may cause unforeseen political and social transformations in the near future.

Up until 2002, KU College of Education has been the sole producer of English language teachers in the country. Due to that fact, a number of problems arose when Kuwait introduced English as a foreign language into primary education in 1993. The shortage of available teachers led the Ministry of Education to recruit untrained teachers who failed to meet the desired qualifications (Al-Mutawa, 1997). As a matter of fact, there was such a sudden high demand for English-speaking teachers, that any Kuwaiti who carried a bachelor degree of English – be it language or literature – was given a teaching job regardless of proper language teaching education, training, or experience.

Moreover, in the mid-1990s, a few years upon the end of the Gulf war (which drastically undermined the efficiency of the local education system), there was not enough time, nor the resource base to train prospective teachers specifically for primary schools. Since the sole source for English teacher education in the country only offered



courses with a focus on the intermediate and secondary levels of education, there was a void at the primary level. As a result, the ministry encouraged intermediate- and secondary-level teachers to transfer to the critical primary stage after undergoing a short in-service training course which familiarised them with the situation. Meanwhile, the government looked to foreign nationals to fill the remaining primary school positions, recruiting them on short-term contracts. Those foreign teachers came primarily from Arabic-speaking, Middle Eastern countries.

The situation improved when CBE at PAAET launched the first primary level English language teaching programme in the country in 2002. Upon completion of the four-year programme, trainee teachers were expected to have completed a comprehensive course that included three major tenets – general education courses, major courses, and vocational courses – ultimately earning a Bachelor's degree in primary teaching.

The programmes at both tertiary establishments, KU and CBE, are four years long, each year being divided into two semesters. The common goal for both programmes is to prepare a qualified teaching force that is able to meet the needs of the local labour market. CBE trainee teacher graduates are trained to teach in primary public schools, whereas KU trainee teacher graduates can choose between two programmes, one tailored to prepare them to teach in primary schools, and the other to teach in intermediate and secondary schools. Student teachers at the KU School of Education enjoy the benefits of a long-established and structured teacher education programme which focuses on both theoretical and practical issues, all conducted in Arabic, a language they understand well. However, their course has an inherent flaw: issues related to TESOL are not extensively covered in the curriculum. Another disadvantage is that, due to the School of Education's affiliation with the School of Arts, trainee teachers have no choice but to become deeply immersed in English

language and literature courses designed with English major students in mind, not ELT students.

The nation-wide curriculum of teacher training includes three main components (Almodaires, 2009). First, there is a cultural preparation element, which is aimed at introducing trainee teachers to the philosophy of education and social sciences. Second, is the academic element, which presents the content-field of specialisation and the main principles of subject delivery. Third, there is the professional or vocational element that covers teaching methods, evaluation and assessment, curriculum, and field-training. At both KU and CBE, content delivery is consecutive, where the three components are spread across all eight semesters. Only the last semester is dedicated to field-training, while the previous seven semesters deliver purely theoretical knowledge.

According to the general description published on the KU website (Kuwait University, 2009) the major goal of the College of Education is “to prepare qualified teaching cadres [...] with a proactive response to national demand for education, and optimization of the teaching workforce” (par. 2, lines 1-4). Functioning in a close rapport with the Ministry of Education, the present educational establishment aims at providing quality instruction in line with recent trends in educational reform, and at training competent professionals who would be able to meet societal demands in support of national development.

At KU, various programmes are offered at three levels: undergraduate level, post-graduate diploma, and graduate studies. The undergraduate level is comprised of courses for preparing kindergarten, primary, intermediate and secondary stage teachers with a major in specific areas and subjects. Postgraduate diplomas are offered in education and psychological counseling, and graduate programmes offer Master’s degrees in the four following majors: curricula and teaching methods, educational foundation, educational administration and school psychological counseling.

As previously mentioned, trainee teachers from the College of Education at KU are obliged to take all of their English major courses outside their college. The compulsory and elective major courses fall within one of the following four areas: Basic Skills (i.e., English composition, varieties of writing, and oral presentations); General Linguistics (i.e., phonetics, syntax, semantics, discourse analysis, transformational grammar, and psycholinguistics); Translation (i.e., principles of translation and Arabic-English translation), and English Literature (i.e., dramatics, Shakespeare and his contemporaries, nineteenth-century novel, Roman and Victorian poetry). From those, trainee teachers are required to complete 15 compulsory courses and either six or seven elective courses, depending on whether they chose to major in primary or intermediate/secondary education.

As for the CBE English language teaching major, trainee teachers are expected to complete four compulsory courses in basic language skills, four courses in literature, one of which is elective, seven courses in linguistics, two of which are elective, and a total of five courses in English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL), one of which is elective. The first group is comprised of developmental practices in conversation, reading, and writing. Linguistics courses include the introduction to the general language theories, phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantic analysis, syntax, English-Arabic-English translation, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, comparative analysis of the English and Arabic languages, and the history of English. The literature courses pertain to British and American fiction and poetry. The EFL/ESL component is introduced through theoretical courses related to Applied Linguistics, instruction in English-language test composition, and practical training in micro-teaching, error analysis, ICT in language learning, and cultural awareness.

I have not yet come across any significant academic research exploring the quality of English-language teacher training at KU. Therefore I will have to rely on the

relevant perceptions of my research participants. As for the CBE curriculum, Al-Darwish (2006) has reported on the following feedback from graduates who have already entered into the professional pipeline. Former CBE trainee teachers criticised the prevalence of theory in the curriculum in parallel with the lack of field training. Subsequently, participants of Al-Darwish's study reported experiencing difficulties when relating their theoretical knowledge to practice. Another problematic issue was the poor command of basic English-language skills observed among the interviewed CBE trainee teacher graduates. These points are part of the overall weakness by which ELT in Kuwait is characterised. The next section will overview the major axes of tension regarding the delivery of English language within the national educational system.

### **Rough Corners of the English Language Teaching Policy in Kuwait**

Prior to the 1990 Iraqi invasion, English functioned solely in the formal educational context as a foreign language, and, therefore, played a minor socio-cultural role for Kuwaitis. In daily communications, locals used the Kuwaiti Arabic dialect, and Standard Arabic was the official medium of formal learning in schools. The situation has changed dramatically during the military operations of the Western coalition forces that were deployed in order to stop the aggression and restore the political balance of powers in the Gulf region. The role of English within Kuwait, as well as the relationship between the English language and the Kuwaiti people, was forever changed during this time:

English was the international language Kuwaiti diplomats spoke to express the catastrophe Kuwait went through...It was the language of communication among the Kuwaiti army and the allied troops. And it was also the language which conveyed messages to Iraq and decisions to the world. Through English, Kuwaiti people expressed their gratitude to all countries that supported them

during the aggressive invasion and that worked hand in hand to liberate their country, Kuwait. (Al-Yaseen, 2000, pp. 21-22)

Upon the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, a significant attitudinal shift occurred in regards to English. English became perceived as the language of liberation and consensus with the global community. Mohammad (2008) explains the phenomenon as follows:

The impact of the occupation has made the Kuwait population different from that in pre-war Kuwait, because of the American influence. Interest has grown in the English language. People have become absorbed with foreign culture and parents have encouraged their children to study foreign languages, in particular English. This has resulted from a massive growth in the need for English in everyday communication in the society (p. 3).

Mohammad (2008) added that the military presence of U.S. military forces in the region stimulated the import of foreign labour forces, whose primary instrument of communication was English. Another outcome of this historical period was a more aggressive introduction of Western consumer-trade labels, which also encouraged local Kuwaiti consumers to learn English in order to orient themselves on the market. The country now needed qualified bilingual citizens with a high command of the English language in order to work in the sectors of petroleum development, banking, transportation, and engineering. The national education system was changed accordingly.

Repercussions from the 1990 Iraqi invasion brought global attention to Kuwait in a new way – much different from Kuwaitis' earlier attempts to dabble in globalisation. English became a need rather than a luxury, a 'must' rather than a non-obligatory choice, a tool for survival on the highly competitive international market rather than a commodity when travelling or shopping. English became the language used to vocalize the shock and disbelief to the world, and even those who sought refuge

in Arab countries quickly realised the need for a second language. This collective traumatic experience brought about a major change in the Kuwaiti mindset, towards wishing to equip themselves and their children with a second, internationally spoken and understood language. This ideological shift ultimately led to changes in both the public and private educational sectors.

More changes to the ideology of English language teaching in Kuwait have come along with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attack on the New York City Trade Center and Pentagon government building in Washington D.C., the teaching of English was cast in a different light where it became conducted under the dubious pretext of “fighting the global menace of Islamic radicalism” (Karmani, 2005, p. 88). The war deployed by the United States against Muslim, Arab-speaking terrorists unified Middle-Eastern countries in their opposition to the English-medium anti-Arab campaign. Furthermore, as Akbar (2007) noted, the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 2003 led to the division of Kuwaitis into two distinct groups, according to their attitudes to the Anglophone Western world.

There was one camp believing that Kuwait would benefit from deposing the regime of Saddam Hussein and maintaining the pro-American democracy in the neighbouring state. The other camp regarded Western policies applied to Middle-Eastern countries as hypocritical: on the one hand, Iraq was occupied by the coalition military forces under the pretext of producing nuclear weapons which were never found; on the other hand, the United States justified and accepted the assaults of the Israeli army against Palestine. The stratification of public opinion in regards to those issues resulted in some alienation of affections towards the English language. Akbar (2007) has cited one four-year-old Kuwaiti boy studying in a private English school who described using English as ‘Haram’ or ‘sin’ against the rules of Islam. Episodes such as this one demonstrate the rise of the claim for national identity and integrity among

Kuwaitis. This change has led to a more sober perspective about the potential for the English language to serve as an efficient ideological power with which to integrate Arab-speaking, Islamic cultures with Anglophone and global cultures.

So it appears that, despite the increasing interest in foreign studies and languages overall, some negative attitudes towards the English language continue to permeate in Kuwait. Parents still want the government to provide an option that enables their children to avoid English education. Indeed, some Kuwaiti students' preference to study English as an elective subject indicates a lower interest in the language, as some say they study it just to secure good grades at the end of the semester. The study by Al-Edwani (2005) conducted at the CBE, as well as the research by Al-Bustan and Al-Bustan (2009) deployed at KU have demonstrated that some Kuwaiti students are not motivated to complete an English course in order to graduate, and therefore experience difficulties in language learning. One reason for such negative attitudes might be the lack of the immediate necessity for English for either their academic studies or future jobs in their home country. Thus, although the general mood is quite receptive towards English as a foreign language and a language for international communication in Kuwait, some negative attitudes remain.

Furthermore, Kuwait is remarkable for what Akbar (2007) has defined as “a double standard national linguistic ideology” (p. 23). On the one hand, the policy set by the Ministry of Education requires Kuwaiti public schools, where almost 70% of local students study, deliver English as a foreign language. Graduates then go to colleges where English is introduced as a medium of instruction to teach science and business, as at KU. The transition between the secondary and tertiary levels of the national education system in regards to English language proficiency is therefore unsmooth and causes frustration and underachievement among university students.

Moreover, during college or in the work force, one's aptitude in English becomes a determinant of social stratification. On the one hand, the main responsibility of educational institutions remains preparing future employees for the government sector, which functions mainly in Arabic. One reason that students are still preparing for this traditional career path is that it is considered to provide safe, long-term careers with reasonable pay. On the other hand, the private sector – including the oil industry, investment or insurance companies, and banks – appeal to more ambitious people, and bears a different set of beliefs and norms. Expectations in these workplaces are high, environments are challenging, performance sets the wages, and almost everything requires English. The continuous growth in the private sector directly influences the status of English and how it is delivered to the future workforce. This rapid economic development implies that future workers “stand to benefit most from English language education because they are already closer to the opportunities offered by increased trade and communication” (Bruthiaux, 2002, p. 293). In this way, English becomes a socio-economic marker of prestige and a medium through which a higher quality of life is made possible. While the call of the day is to operate English fluently, the national education system faces serious problems when preparing students to become fluent English speakers.

The problems of English language teaching in Kuwait are, mainly, quality and achievement. Al-Edwani (2005) has named the following drawbacks of the formal learning environment in Kuwait resulting from inadequate instruction. She cites the unprofessionalism of teachers who do not speak English well enough themselves to deliver it appropriately as either a medium of instruction or a separate course subject; in some schools, the continued use of the outdated methodology, which heavily relied on the grammar-translation method, despite the current official curricular emphasis on the audio-lingual and communicative frameworks; and the lack of students' training in



academic and critical skills. The same shortcomings are cited by Al-Darwish (2006) who has mentioned in addition the teacher-centredness of the learning process and the remaining dominance of old-fashioned teaching by drills in English language classrooms. Ghubash (2007) has taken a broader perspective, listing major problems not just in ELT / EFL, but in general Kuwaiti education such as “reduced knowledge, low level of skills, failure and dropping out, educational imbalances, lack of professional commitment by teachers, low investment spending on education compared to current expenditure, lack of measurement tools and periodic assessment of the performance of the educational system” (pp. 331-332). Finally, Mohammad (2008) has criticised the new curriculum presented by the Ministry of Education in 2002 that brings to the foreground only listening and speaking skills, while neglecting reading and writing skills.

Educational specialists have devised a range of measures aimed at improving the status quo of education in Kuwait, and to reform the state educational system so as to meet the requirements of quality, accountability, affordability and relatedness of instructional outcomes required by the present socio-economic situation. The most important target remains the professional training of teachers. The present dissertation project covers the issue in depth.

### **Conclusion – Researching Kuwait’s Modern English Language Context**

The aim of the present study is to analyze the professional conceptual frameworks of the next generation of English teachers trained by the curricula outlined earlier. The teachers’ perceptions about the whole ELT system are a major concern for Kuwaiti society which will be influenced by those serving in the educational sector professionally. Thus, in the present context, the opinion of the new generation of teachers cannot be ignored when formulating educational policies. These professionals must understand the policies as well as their own needs as they are the ones who will be

responsible for adhering to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, various stakeholders of the educational systems as well as by the general socio-political and economic environment. As recent trainee teacher graduates, they can also point out deficiencies in the present system more easily and effectively – before they become entrenched in it. Therefore, based on the discussion presented herein, not only the future system of training and improvement of language and teaching skills, but also the cultural and political mindset of the country need insights from the next generation of English language teachers. They can provide valuable reflections over English-language instruction. Moreover, they have the power to move the country towards a more critical understanding of foreign language and education in the era of globalism and competing ideological and methodological messages existing in ELT policy making.

### **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

This literature review attempts to analyse the complex phenomenon of (TESOL) as affected by various socio-linguistic contexts. Specifically it traces phenomena which are likely to affect future Kuwaiti teachers in their conceptualisations of the English language as functioning in the educational environment of Kuwait. Stakeholders of the teaching/learning process in the country face multiple challenges due to competing processes observed in education and public life. To name a few, there is the continuous, active introduction of English to the academic curricular (Anglicisation) together with the expansion of English learning programmes sponsored by foreign governments and institutions (Dollman, 2007). These trends come in parallel with the contemplated Arabic language crisis (Al-Askari, 2009; Al-Jarf, 2008; Laroussi, 2003) and degradation of the national system of education – the system that is claimed to suffer from multiple crises such as a decrease in students’ academic achievements and the decline in professionalism of the country’s teaching workforce (Al-Majallah, 2007; Bowman, 2008; Mohammad, 2008).

There is a consensus regarding the necessity to promote large-scale reform in the Kuwaiti education network (“Kuwait's education system”, 2008; “School system objectives”, 2008; “Economic development”, 2009), especially in the area of ELT within the Arab-medium context. Those who teach and study English in Kuwait must work within outdated conceptual and methodological frameworks that fail to address such important issues as the role of language as a cultural and ideological marker, the still-evolving critical paradigm in pedagogy and linguistics, expansion of teachers’ knowledge base, and language policymaking in multilingual, multicultural environments.

The current chapter is comprised of five sections, each including an overview of the relevant theoretical concepts as supported by empirical research. Moreover, I trace

the relevance of cited studies to the Arab context and, where possible, to Kuwait. The first section – *Role of the English Language in the Global Network* – examines the status of English in the post-colonial, and globalised context. The second section – *World Englishes or English Worldwide?* – provides details on the existing taxonomies of English within the system of world languages and discusses the potential of these figurations for ELT in the Kuwaiti environment, taking into account the ambivalent role of the English language as functioning outside the Anglophone countries. The third section – *TESOL: A silent revolution?* – analyses the field of TESOL and the active reformative processes it is undergoing, involving aspects of linguistic ecology, epistemology, methodology, and resistance. The fourth section – *English Language Teacher Preparation* – critically assesses the system of knowledge, skills, and competencies that should encourage TESOL pedagogues to deliver the subject in the most appropriate manner. The final section – *Language Policymaking* – identifies the objectives and elements of sociolinguistic planning and contextualises theoretical insights to educational contexts in Malaysia, Iceland, Israel, and the Arab countries. Each vignette presents a valuable example of how languages and ideologies may be managed and co-exist within a single cultural and linguistic system. The section concludes by *Building a Case for Kuwait* synthesising the various approaches to language policymaking and filtering them in terms of benefits and deficiencies.

### **Role of the English Language in the Global Network**

The growing diversification of the English language – once a monolithic concept (Kachru & Nelson, 2001) – in terms of functions and areas make it a polyadic phenomenon of many varieties, each having its own unique voice in the global orchestra. English nowadays should be regarded as a linguistic and sociocultural code for members of various communities that differ in geographical location, mentality, ideology and discourse practices. Within the scope of the current research, globalisation

– which has been previously used in a narrow economic sense – acquires a broader sociocultural connotation to describe a sense of shared belonging or a multi-factor social process that requires “a shared *linguistic* code” [emphasis in original] (Block & Cameron, 2002, p. 1). Giddens (1990) defined globalisation as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). Put differently, the phenomenon of globalisation implies the continuous interplay between the global – referring to space- and time-condensed environments with soft geographical and national borders – and the local as manifested via distinctive national cultures and languages (Graddol, 2005).

Some researchers treat the globalising trend as “a homogenizing process” (Block & Cameron, 2002, p. 3) aimed at levelling different socio-cultural and linguistic environments across the globe. The camp that Steger (2003, see also Kumaravadivelu, 2007) named ‘hyperglobalizers’ welcomes creating a shared, convenient environment that is supposed to neutralise and eliminate nationalist threats as well as to create a common ground for negotiating various socio-linguistic values through the medium of English. The competing school of ‘localizers’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2007) assumes that globalisation would destroy the uniqueness of local identities. The third viewpoint argues that the matter of choosing a single language (i.e., English) fails to solve multiple problems posed within the global framework. Glocalizers call for joining what Graddol (2005) (see also Canagarajah, 2006a) has called “linguistic postmodernity” – the multilateral communication of nations across porous boundaries that features cultural, ideological, and linguistic hybridity, heterogeneity, and fluidity. The same idea of synthesis can be found also in Bakhtin’s (2004) theory of social heteroglossia, Holliday’s (1999) dichotomy of small and large cultures, and Kumaravadivelu’s (2007) concept of globalization.

According to the theory of social heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 2004), the language system is conditioned by both centripetal and centrifugal forces along its entire life cycle. On the one hand, any language tends to exist as the solid entity, “the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 270), or a sustainable codex of norms that is manifested in both everyday conversations and literary speech. On the other hand, a live language is being constantly involved in a process of social heteroglossia, “a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 263). This diversity may be perceived as a continuous data flow within a single ‘large’ culture among many ‘small’ cultures, which – according to Holliday (1999) – are being formed dynamically by multiple actors. These actors organise themselves into culturally diverse groups “to make sense of and operate meaningfully within [changing] circumstances” (Holliday, 1999, p. 248). In other words the same nation consists of several culturally diversified micro-communities that have to negotiate socio-linguistic values and ideologies to find consensus. A similar process occurs on the cross-national scale where different large cultures step into a complex polylogue. I think this is a case of English which is experiencing a phenomenon of social heteroglossia resulting in various Englishes being present across the world.

The organisation of this multilayered socio-cultural system, the most essential characteristics of which are heterogeneity, fluidity, social heteroglossia and competing culture/language ideologies: centres on the principles of glocalization that is “a two-way process in which cultures in contact shape and reshape each other directly or indirectly” (Kumaravadivelu, 2007, p. 44). The mutual global-local impacts are manifested in economy, science, technology, and – as essentially relevant to the current research – the English language and English language education. One of many possible illustrations for the trend is the parallel use of the native and foreign languages in the community.

For example, Spolsky (1998) observed that 44% of street guides in the Old City of Jerusalem were written in both Hebrew and English. Palfreyman and Al Khalil (2003) commented on latinization of the native language in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, where Roman letters were used to transliterate Arab words on information signs and in computer-mediated messages. The same phenomenon was found in Kuwait (Al-Yaseen, 2000) where it may illustrate an effort to welcome foreigners while simultaneously preserving the uniqueness of the national culture and language.

Kuwait provides a fertile ground for globalisation by demonstrating a great degree of openness towards the worldwide community. For example, Kuwait agreed to be compared with foreign states on the quality of education by taking part in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study conducted by the U.S. Ministry of Education (UNDP, 2003). The initiative can be cited as a positive example of joining the global network of accountability. More so, the establishment of cross-national companies and the development of the national economic sector encourage extensive use of English as a comprehensive communicative code and as an additional informational channel within external sociocultural and business environments. Finally, the popularity of code-switching – the simultaneous use of several languages within a single speech act (Akbar, 2007) – among young Kuwaitis signifies a hybridization (El-Dib, 2004) which allows for employing multiple strategies of meaning negotiation under the conditions of multilingualism and multiculturalism. All the abovementioned processes of code-switching, latinization of NSA media, and interlingual transfer as registered in Kuwait celebrate the emergence of a new functional literacy.

I believe that the synthetic approach to linguistic and cultural studies as grounded in the ideas of social heteroglossia, the dialogue between small and large cultures and glocalization can provide a promising framework to research the ELT scene in Kuwait. The section below will present an overview of English as being a part

of the global linguistic and cultural space. I am also going to discuss the potential of the three major models of English within the family of world languages – the ‘floral’, the ‘three-circles’, and the plurilithic 3-Dimensional (3D) ones – for Kuwaitis.

### **World Englishes or English Worldwide?**

The current section consists of two parts: ‘Models of English language utilisation’ and ‘English – A Blessing or a Threat?’. The former describes and compares the three conceptualisations of English language in the form of the floral figuration (de Swaan, 1991), the three-circles model (Kachru, 1990; Kachru & Nelson, 2001) and the most recent plurilithic 3D model (Yano, 2009). Analysis of those models will be linked to the socio-linguistic situation of Kuwait. The latter subsection discusses the positive and negative impacts of the English language and culture on non-Anglophone contexts, including the Arab countries and Kuwait specifically. Moreover, to illustrate the potential threats of GE, I am going to explore the concept of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 2009b) and relate the phenomenon to the Kuwaiti environment.

#### **Models of English Language Utilisation**

The last decades have evidenced an argument between three well-known, competing taxonomies of English language usage. The earlier classification of English as based on the “floral figuration” of world languages by de Swaan (1991, p. 314) names the English language among those few supra- and hypernational sociolinguistic codes that are used by non-native speakers as “self-expanding global lingua franca” (de Swaan, 1991, p. 314) across national boundaries for economic and communicative needs. The “floral” model of world languages (de Swaan, 1991) symbolically depicts the ‘central language’ (i.e., the mother tongue of the literate elite and the official language of public institutions) as the pith of the flower, while the ‘supracentral’/‘supranational’ language (i.e., the medium of controlling communication between the state administration and various ethnicities within a state) together with the



‘hypercentral’ language (i.e., the language used across national boundaries) stand for the more or less overlapping floral petals.

Kachru (1990) has employed the same systemic principle (i. e. classifying a language depending on its sociocultural area of distribution) to develop a new conceptualisation of the ways in which the English language may function in contemporary geopolitical realities. To specify, English was envisioned as existing in the system of world languages within the ‘three circles’ named ‘inner’, ‘outer’, and ‘expanding’ (Kachru, 1990; also Kachru & Nelson, 2001).

The ‘inner’ circle is formed by the states that are the homes of the “standard English” or English as mother tongue – i.e., Great Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. This ‘Language First’ (L1) environment is norm-enforcing – native speakers are likely to impose the ‘correct’ centralised variety of English utilised as a birthright on people from the non-Anglophone countries. The ‘outer’ circle refers to locations where usage of English was historically restricted to social institutions (educational establishments, government offices, editorial houses, etc.) and decision-making functions – e.g., India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, and Zambia. Finally, the ‘expanding’ circle is shaped by countries such as China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Nepal, and so on wherein English serves a written code for scientific and technological knowledge. The ‘outer circle’ communities develop their own norms by modifying the ‘standard’ English according to the local norms and values to obtain English as the second language. In their turn, members of the ‘expanding circle’ are more norm-dependent in the efforts to standardise their speech according to the ‘inner’ circle’ pattern to utilise English as a foreign language.

Kachru (1990) and later Phillipson (1992) distinguished the English of the ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ countries, which were called as such, depending on the extent of compliance with the socio-linguistic standard. Outside countries where it is the first or

native language, English is treated as either the second (ESL)/ “L2”, or foreign (EFL) language. The difference between the two is as follows. In multilingual states ESL functions as both the official language of school curriculum and as a communication option for elitist business and intellectual relationships (see also Kachru & Nelson, 2001). EFL, on the other hand, is studied by non-native-English speakers within formal educational programmes that are generally delivered in other-than-English languages, and its usage domains are mostly restricted to academia, global business, and international relationships.

On the one hand, it seems that the three-circles model is not that different from the floral paradigm since both taxonomies rely on the concept of ‘central language’ or ‘norm’. However, Kachru’s framework includes “the underlying universe of discourse which makes linguistic interaction a pleasure and provides it with ‘meaning’” (Kachru, 1990, p. 93), thereby liberating English language speakers from the dogma of an artificially created ideal of English in terms of pronunciation or the choice of structural linguistic elements. For this reason, the three-circles conceptualisation is often lauded as surpassing the floral figuration model in flexibility and validity, as well as providing a sharpened ideological agenda (Schneider, 2003).

Yet Kachru’s model has also been criticised for a number of reasons. For example, Canagarajah (2006b) has called Kachru’s framework outdated, since it fails to portray the rapidly changing geopolitical picture of the world. The researcher argues that since national boundaries are ‘leaking’, native speakers should be aware of the alternative Englishes that have gained proliferation in the outer circle. Furthermore, judging from the example of Germany with its recognisable local variety of English, the expanding circle cannot be clearly differentiated from the outer circle on the principle of the former lacking the English-language localized varieties. Relying on empirical evidence, Canagarajah (2006b) states that, to gain intelligibility, multilingual inhabitants

of the expanding circle utilise independent norms rather than depend on the standards of the inner circle. Finally, the inner circle's ownership of the English language – its norm-enforcing nature – is questioned, given that the population of the expanding-circle community outnumbers 'native' speakers.

An interesting point of criticism about the three-circle framework was presented by Wallace (2002). She argues that the triumphalist appraisal of English language varieties endangers the gold standard of English in terms of literacy. She describes it as a "context dependent and situationally contingent" (Wallace, 2002, p. 102) practice associated with both private domains of knowledge and culture (horizontal literacies) on the one hand, and with public environments of academic education and public activity (vertical literacies) on the other hand. Localised derivatives of English are horizontal literacies as they are supported by the micro-climates of family, social or professional community, and ethnic clan; whereas the discourse of elocution and classical literature that is structured according to strictly defined conventions are vertical literacies in that they survive across time and space forming the backbone of a universal culture. Wallace (2002) does not deny that an individual normally needs both kinds of literacies to assimilate and produce knowledge. However, the vertical literacy that belongs to the centre of the language system allows for the flexible operation of written language used in formal discourses. This ability moulds a person into an intellectual who is capable of negotiating multiple meanings offered by the contemporary world.

Overall, attempts to build a model of English as fitting into the family of world languages paved the road for many important topics of research. Scholars have reached agreement on the fact that contemporary English is a rich and flexible system that can boast of versatility in regards to 'ranges' (functional contexts), 'registers' (paralinguistic situational frameworks or specific jargon in particular semantic fields), and grades of 'depth' (applicability at different levels of the social ladder) (Kachru, 1990; Kachru &

Nelson, 2001). Kirkpatrick (2007) brilliantly captured this idea in the form of the so-called identity-communication continuum. It provides a coordinate grid for a speaker to choose between language varieties depending on conversational claims such as the extent of formality (table talk vs. business meeting), mode of speech (oral vs. written discourse), type of informational medium (a press release vs. a live radio commentary). The choice is guided by the dynamic operation of three functions that are typical for language – communication, identity and culture (Holliday, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2007). Knowledge of this kind helps to explain complex sociolinguistic processes in hybrid environments and enriches the conceptual framework of English as evolving both diachronically (on a temporal scale from the past to the present) and synchronically (occurring simultaneously) (Crystal, 2003, 2004; Schneider, 2003).

Yano (2009) disapproves of the Kachruvian three circle model as a geographically-based concept and suggests instead the three-dimensional (3D) model of Englishes consisting of the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The difference between Kachru's and Yano's systems lie in the type of English that is set as the standard across the levels. While the Kachruvian model refers to the inner circle variety as a reference point for members of the outer and expanding belts, Yano's design refers to the interactive environment where speakers of English as a foreign language from the expanding circle, speakers of English as a second language from the outer circle, and native speakers from the inner circle are placed on equal terms in acquiring proficiency in the four types of English: English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Intra-Regional Standard English (intra-RSE), and English as an International Language (EIL). In regards to EGP, people from the expanding and outer circles aim at keeping in pace with native speakers from the inner circle, while the latter need to acquire cross-cultural communication strategies. If acquisition of ESP is under question, "English speakers in the three circles equally must

make an effort to gain professional and linguistic knowledge in respective disciplines” (Yano, 2009, p. 215). The intra-RSE varieties are defined as a communicative means across geographical regions such as Europe or Asia. They are placed below EIL which is considered to be “the ultimate level of proficiency for cross-regional or international communication” (Yano, 2009, p. 216). This phenomenon comprises multiple identities of speakers of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The clear goal of the model is to refute the native-speakers myth (discussed in Pennycook, 2007; Ricento, 2006; - the concept is referred to in the Discussion section) and provide all English language users with equal linguistic rights.

As far as English is concerned, researchers (Al-Yaseen, 2000) face problems with clearly defining its role in Kuwait. On the one hand, English was originally introduced to Kuwaiti public secondary schools (since 1966) as a foreign language. In spite of the 1996 initiative to lower the age, at which children start learning English, from 10 to age 6, no changes in the official status of the tongue from the educational perspective have occurred. Until recently, English within the school environment used to be “a subject for test-passing” (Al-Edwani, 2005, p. 31) – a mandatory element of academic curricular, studied for its instrumental effectiveness but unworthy of use outside the learning context.

On the other hand, there is substantial evidence for English functioning as a second language in Kuwait. Since Kuwait’s disaffiliation with the Ottoman empire in 1896, English was considered as an important instrument for the nation to join the Western world and to maintain economic and cultural relationships with partners from Anglophone countries – Great Britain and the United States – who have had a presence in Kuwait since 1936 via the field of oil extraction and production. Anglicisation of the Kuwaiti sociocultural environment is explained by historical, political, and economic factors (Al-Yaseen, 2000). In this aspect, Kuwait has a great deal in common with other

Arab countries (Abi-Mershed, 2010; Findlow, 2005, 2006; Karmani, 2005 – referred to in the appropriate vignette, this chapter, and in the Discussion chapter). Another reason that English has, over time, begun to function as a second language is because proficiency in English has become a pre-requisite for obtaining better employment opportunities and a wider range of social privileges.

Furthermore, English-medium teaching that is practiced in international and bilingual private schools has become a marker of better learning standards (Akbar, 2007; Al-Darwish, 2006 – discussed in the Background chapter). Reacting to the shift in public attitudes towards English, the national ministry of education is considering the feasibility of teaching English at an even younger age – to pre-school children, ages 3-5 (“First preparatory stage”, 2008). Among other reasons, one supporting factor of early exposure to English is that the country’s oldest and most respected tertiary-level education establishment – KU – as well as some educational colleges and training institutions managed by PAAET conduct required subject entrance tests/interviews and deliver some of the curricular in English. The following empirical evidence proves that such pro-Anglicisation policy is positively evaluated by Kuwaiti students.

Malallah (2000) interviewed 409 students enrolled in KU, 65% of whom received instruction in Arabic. Upon analysis of their answers to the questionnaires, Malallah concluded that most of the respondents considered English language learning to be important for future career-building and communication with the global community. These findings reveal that the younger generations of Kuwaitis are interested in actively acquiring English-medium literacy as a culturally and ideologically meaningful key to many academic and social advantages. El-Dib (2004) elicited similar responses concerning attitudes towards English from 750 students enrolled in the four colleges of PAAET. Participants of this study found Kuwait’s social

environment highly advantageous in terms of studying English as an additional linguistic medium that is valid outside classrooms.

Research findings cited above indicate that Kuwaiti learners of English aim at improving their command of the language through various means. Given this information, the Kachruvian model will be the most suitable to describe the situation in Kuwait. Yano's framework is less applicable because in the process of their English language studies Kuwaiti students tend to aspire towards native speakers' pronunciation and vocabulary, as well as ideology. This assumption is supported by the prevalence of the communicative approach to TESOL as present in the country's educational context (El-Dib, 2004; Mohammad, 2008). Within this framework language is conceptualised as a medium to convey the functional aspects of meaning. The trend makes local learners of English dependent from the central-variety norm, and this orientation towards the single language variety contradicts the idea of Yano's 3D cylindrical model.

In their triumphalist acceptance of Anglicisation a good deal of Kuwaitis place themselves on the periphery of the English-speaking community (literally following the conventions of the floral language model) thus overlooking the rich potential of the mother tongue and native culture to form a new core of synthetic multi-dimensional literacy in both English and Arabic that might enrich each other. While motivations demonstrated by Kuwaitis in their English studies are typical of the second language environment, the methodology provided by the national education system belongs to the EFL paradigm. The discrepancy between aims and instruments of TESOL in Kuwait presents a serious hindrance to shaping the qualitative English-Arabic dialogue by means of the three-circles model that surpasses the floral conceptualisation in terms of flexibility, dynamicity, and tolerance. This assumption leads to posing the question that will be discussed in the following sub-section – whether English is a blessing or a threat for non-native speakers, and specifically for Kuwaitis.

## **English: A Blessing or a Threat?**

The presentation of the Kachruvian three-circles model and the more recent Yano's 3D model, as well as the subsequent identification of various relevant issues have involved contemporary academia in a hot discussion over the status of English. This debate is commonly labelled as 'New Englishes' (Kachru, 1990; Crystal, 2003), 'World Englishes' (Graddol, 2001; Kachru & Nelson, 2001), 'Global English' (Crystal, 2004; Graddol, 2005), or 'English as lingua franca' (Canagarajah, 2006b; Jenkins, 2007). Some researchers (e.g., Crystal, 2003; Kachru, 1990; Kachru & Nelson, 2001) have developed a neutral or enthusiastic attitude toward the argued emergence of English as a global language. For example, Crystal (2003) has called English "global" since it is widely spread across the globe as a medium of economics, mass culture, and technology. A special status of English in the countries with non-English mother tongues has made some people aspire to a transnational meta-culture and meta-language, like that which developed preceding the construction of the Tower of Babel. Meanwhile, the rival camp (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a, b) criticise the very concept of a uniform communicative code for various reasons. For example, the usage of the metaphor "killer language" (Kachru, 2004, p. 173; see also Schneider, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003) in regards to English to describe its complex impact on indigenous languages and cultures.

The ambiguity of English from the point of relationships with other sociolinguistic systems provides a clue to the ELF debate. To remind, de Swaan (1991) optimistically paid compliments to English as a language, the usage of which extends beyond the native-speaking population, shaping "a network of communicative interdependence" (p. 321) and serving as a tool of economic cooperation, international communication, and mutual benefit. In such a treatment of the English language de Swaan (1991) is not alone. Jenkins (2007) has stated recently that the term English as



Lingua Franca (ELF) outperforms the terms ESL or EFL when applied to describe today's multilingual, multicultural environment. Unlike ESL, ELF takes into account communicative direction and is utilised for communication *between* rather than *within* nations. With ELF, international affairs significantly contribute to the proliferation of English outside native-speaking countries – and the mother tongue status. Moreover, where EFL tends to replicate English as a Native Language, ELF exists as a self-sustained code for communication between mainly non-native speakers. Within this train of thought, Jenkins (2007) argues that ELF is able to support the formation of a new hybrid sociocultural identity outside Anglophone countries, an identity that would flexibly synthesise the elements of multiple interacting sociolinguistic media without depriving any of their unique backgrounds.

On this point, Jenkins' reasoning echoes with those who call for liberating the worldwide English language teaching methodology from "ESL and EFL orthodoxies" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 13) by introducing the new terms such as English as an Additional Language (EAL) – which attempts to cover the gap between the ideologically ambiguous definitions of ESL and EFL – and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – which puts a heavy emphasis on linguistic rights. However, there are certain limitations on the enthusiastic acceptance of the ELF concept.

On this matter, Holliday (2009) stresses that the issue of ELF or any other relevant language ideology (EIL, ESL, etc.) should be discussed only in the context to which it is applied; that is, in order to discuss the appropriateness of ELF for the Periphery, one should be inside the Periphery's social and cultural context. Furthermore, Holliday (2009) does not believe in what he defines as "the linguistic philanthropy of the English as a lingua franca movement" (p. 27), or the claimed equality of all English language speakers since there are still many cases when the phenomenon of 'native-speakerism' prevails. For example, native-speakers are more easily accepted to

educational establishments as English language teachers despite worldwide efforts to make English more accessible and inclusive.

To clarify further the multidimensionality of ELF, let us consider the case of Kuwait where English is used as a popular functional instrument of communication between various ethnic and national groups. An important caution in regards to the supposed LF (lingua franca) status of English in Kuwait is the concept of *mutual benefit* that is mentioned by de Swaan (1991) and Jenkins (2007). It is questionable whether the deep-level introduction of English to outer and expanding cultural/linguistic environments would bring exclusively positive results to all agents. Finally, it is possible that the ELF concept somehow fails to address the functionality of English in its full vigour. Jenkins (2007) highlights the communicative or instrumental role of language and seems to silence the efficiency of the tongue in producing and sustaining literacy (see Wallace, 2002, discussed above).

Nevertheless, in spite of these questions, the lingua franca thesis helps to acknowledge the importance of cross-national and cross-group dialogue as being freed from a very serious disease – linguistic imperialism. Taken in a historical perspective, this is a specific strategy of colonial empires (i.e., Great Britain, France, Spain, etc.) to impose their own languages onto colonised territories. Phillipson (1992) has indicated that the phenomenon is a sub-type of linguicism, a situation when communities are forcefully deprived of a full range of resources and power on the criterion of the language they speak. From this perspective, Anglophone linguistic imperialism should be treated as the longstanding destruction of cultural harmony between English and other tongues, by which the hegemony of English is sustained. To put it differently, the phenomenon addresses the disproportional distribution of potency (both material and ideological) between those who speak English and those who do not.

From the viewpoint of ELT, linguistic imperialism can result in the following five tenets or fallacies (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185):

- The *monolingual* fallacy – the belief that English language teaching should be conducted entirely in English without references to the learner’s mother tongue and culture.
- The native speaker fallacy – the assumption that a person who was born in the Anglophone inner circle country is a more competent pedagogue of English than any other candidate.
- The early start fallacy – the establishment of a link between the age of language learning and the level of linguistic proficiency.
- The maximum exposure fallacy – the believed cause-effect relationship between the high intensity of immersion into English and an increase in academic results.
- The subtractive fallacy – the tendency to restrict the use of non-Anglophone media within curriculum and socially meaningful communication.

In his recent study, Phillipson (2009b) expands the idea of linguistic imperialism, stating that the phenomenon survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He stresses that a misbalance of powers between the ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers contributes to the emergence of inequality and hierarchies, at which point the latter are “internalized subconsciously and serve hegemonic purposes” (Phillipson, 2009b, p. 40). He also proposes a link between English as the language and the discrepancy in social, economic, political, and linguistic statuses. The most harmful side effect he cites of linguistic imperialism today is secrecy of language policies which silence the rights of underprivileged speakers of English (i.e., those from the outer and expanding circles) and prescribe compliance with the inner circle standard.

The validity of the *monolingual* ELT methodology is refuted by empirical research. Mahmoud (2000) asked 50 third-year secondary-school Omani students to provide a written translation of two variants of a text in Arabic. One in Modern Standard Arabic MSA and the other in Non-Standard Arabic NSA into English. Analysis of 35 mistakes made by 24 students has revealed that participants were likely to transfer from both varieties of the mother tongue during English-mediated problem solving. This finding suggests that it is impossible to exclude native linguistic schemes from the process of foreign language acquisition. Furthermore, Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000) studied essays that were written on the same topic in Arabic and English by 150 students from Jordan University of Science and Technology. They concluded that the level of proficiency in the mother tongue was highly predicative of English language skills. Given the abovementioned findings and theoretical research concerning the link between the native language literacy and performance in natural sciences (Halliday & Martin, 2004), it is possible to hypothesise a direct association between Anglicisation of Kuwait's educational curricular and recently reported besetting phenomena such as the frustrating results of tests in Mathematics and Science that have been obtained from Kuwaiti students (Bowman, 2008; "Fourth, eighth graders rank", 2008) as well as the troublesome, inadequate level of literacy in Standard Arabic that is being observed in the Arab region generally (Al-Askari, 2002, 2009; Al-Jarf, 2008; Laroussi, 2003).

Furthermore, Kubota (2002) has illustrated the danger of the native speaker imperial fallacy in her criticism of the Japanese education policy, at the core of which is the "native speaker myth" or "the idealization of a native speaker as someone who has perfect, innate knowledge of the language and culture and thus is the best teacher of English" (p. 21). In the case of Japan this manifestation of linguistic imperialism is linked to racial prejudices – according to Kubota (2002), the Japanese suspect that black

English language instructors are not able to deliver the North American or British varieties on a due level.

To summarise, both theoretical and empirical testimonies certify that linguistic imperialism may result in the following: weakened digestion of knowledge among students, destruction of harmonious relationships between learners and the broader socio-linguistic environment, erosion of mother tongues and, ultimately, their extinction (e.g., observed in a range of aboriginal languages in Canada – Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a). In the light of the abovementioned, it is worth reviewing the following example. In June, 2008, the education minister of Hong-Kong, China, obliged 80% of the local secondary schools, that had been previously delivering their curricular in English since 1997, to teach in the mother tongue (Cantonese, a variety of the Chinese language) starting from 2009 (“The cat got your mother tongue”, 2008). The decision was informed by inadequacy of the learning process in the so-called “English-medium” establishments where English textbooks were used. Students’ parents became extremely unsatisfied with the initiative and started competing with each other by sending their children to Anglicised schools. Experts have explained the trend by the high social value that is ascribed to English in Hong-Kong – proficiency in English is a requirement for university and most job placements. Under the pressure of public opinion, the ministry of education receded from the initial position and allowed the teaching of most school subjects to return to English.

What lessons can be learnt from the abovementioned scenarios concerning the case of Kuwait? Kuwait currently experiences some of the tenets of language imperialism listed by Phillipson (1992, 2009b). This is especially evident in the realm of tertiary education. Many subjects at colleges and universities are delivered in English – the policy extrapolates pro-imperialist constraints beyond the realm of ELT. It seems problematic to relate the content of Anglicised curricular to graduates’ future

professional contexts. For example, doctors, who have been trained in English, are then expected to face multiple difficulties while interacting with Arabic-speaking patients in various medical situations. To raise the efficiency of the services sector, Dr. Al-Awadi, Secretary General of the Centre for the Arabisation of Health Sciences for the League of Arab States, has recently underlined the importance of Arabisation that he believes should be implemented at least in medical and health sciences university departments; he also called for political decision-making to support the planned strategy (“Arabization of Medical Services”, 2008). However, at the moment of writing this chapter, Al-Awadi’s proposal was the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Furthermore, the traces of pro-imperialistic tenets (Phillipson, 1992, 2009b) can be found in the recent proposal of the national ministry of education (“First preparatory stage” 2008) to facilitate younger learners’ transition to the English-medium school environment by introducing English to preschoolers. Local authorities evidently hoped to remediate the problem of poor English-language test results as observed among school-aged Kuwaitis by extending the period of exposure to the foreign tongue. However, researchers (e.g., Al-Darwish, 2006; Al-Edwani, 2005) state that quantification of curricular-related parameters means little without the qualitative reconstruction of the existing learning framework. Taking into account these considerations, many researchers studying the issues of English language teaching in Kuwait stress that the national system of professional training for ELT pedagogues should be completely revised – most importantly in terms of teachers’ professionalism. Possible strands for improvements in this direction will be discussed in the following sections.

### **TESOL: A Silent Revolution?**

There have been many attempts made to free English language learners from the dictatorship of monolithic, socio-culturally uniform, and educationally impoverished

linguistic and ideological concepts. Since 1966, the year of the founding of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), a global association for English language professional educators, this educational realm has been experiencing significant shifts in regards to epistemology, methodology, teaching paradigms and teacher knowledge base. The recent TESOL framework is remarkable for what is often referred to as revolution (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2000) in the sense that teachers' knowledge base has been re-oriented from the technical and methodological issues towards sociocultural implications of learning. The outcomes of these serious changes in ELT are expected to occur in regards to the intensification of the criticality element and recasting of methods and methodologies into pragmatically important learning resources that are able to improve English-medium interactions both inside and outside classrooms walls.

It is important to emphasise here that the critical perspective on TESOL has emerged rather recently, and is still a process of development and recognition. Holliday (2005) describes the status quo as a conflict between BANA (language instruction in private or commercial language centres of Great Britain, Australia and Northern America) and TESEP (language instruction delivered in state tertiary, secondary and primary establishments across the world) – this idea is referred to further in the Discussion chapter. While BANA is “an innovative ... culture of integrated skills,” TESEP is “a more traditional culture of collections of academic subjects” (Holliday, 2005, p. 3). Although BANA employs more advanced and efficient ELT methods, it is called “predatory” (Holliday, 2005, p. 3) because of the implied superiority of 'native speakers' over the other English language users. The gap between the inner and the outer and expanding circles in terms of language instruction and policy is being mediated under the critical TESOL approach.

Taking the works of Vygotsky (1987), Halliday (2007), and Bakhtin (2004) concerning the nature of language learning as its starting point, the critical approach views pedagogy in general and ELT in specific as a dialogically created, problem-posing activity being stimulated by the social context. This educational paradigm stands on the constructionist principles of dynamism, perspective causality, and orientation towards transformative action (Crotty, 2003; Pring, 2004), following also the guidelines provided by Paulo Freire (2008/1974) who called for granting equal rights and the freedom of choice to all stakeholders of the learning process for the sake of eliminating or at least reducing the degree of victimisation.

The TESOL paradigm is considered critical for re-assessing the functionality of English in the cross-cultural dynamic environment. (It should be noted that despite the general awareness about the critical TESOL strand, mainstream conceptualisations and principles still prevail in the worldwide educational community.) By utilising the revised concept of World Englishes as extending across three different sociocultural contexts, this school of thought has appropriated some ideas from liberal multiculturalism – it equates speakers of different languages on the ideological scale believing that efficiency of communication depends on the choice of genres and discourses (Cameron, 2002); or from superficially liberal educational frameworks – it defines the quality of EFL/ESL teaching as the maximum immersion of learners into the target language and auspicious social network (Harris, Leung, & Rampton, 2002). Such borrowings have resulted in a preoccupation with methodological issues being devoid of localised implications. The triumphalist acceptance of English as the supposed unifier of global speakers and learners have produced a pseudo-confidence in the proportional distribution of power across the three circles, as delineated by Kachru (1990; Kachru & Nelson, 2001). However, Kazmi (1997; see also Holliday, 2005, 2009; Pennycook, 2001a) has expressed doubt concerning the equality of English language varieties and



speakers across the various circles in terms of power allocation. For example, an Indian child learns English to become socially visible, while there is no direct relationship between the proficiency in English and a higher social status for a child from the inner circle. English language learners from Anglophone countries spend less intellectual and material resources to acquire knowledge in the subject as compared to their colleagues from the outer and expanding belts. Even if dissemination of English within the multi-level network described by Kachru is supposed to create a sense of shared belonging for everyone, only a small group of players defines the rules of a game concerning norms, criteria for inclusion, and members' hierarchy.

In order not to miss a very important implication of the critically revised TESOL paradigm – the link between language studies and sociocultural environments as ideological constructs – I will next introduce the concept of linguistic ecology that guides my exploration of theoretical issues concerning epistemology and methodology of modern TESOL, as extrapolated onto the Kuwaiti ELT scene.

### **Linguistic Ecology**

Complex issues pertinent to the proliferation of English worldwide has afforded legitimisation and pragmatic deployment of the concept 'linguistic ecology' (Creese & Martin, 2003; Ricento, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a, b). This term denotes a system comprised of geographical, socio-economic, and cultural factors to provide "an exploration of the relationship of languages to each other and to the society in which these languages exist" (Creese & Martin, 2003, p. 1). In other words, language does not exist in vacuum but is affected by a wide range of factors that either contribute to or hinder the process of its learning. The concept of linguistic ecology has equipped stakeholders of English language education with an awareness of the ultimate goal of teaching and learning – that is, not only to achieve proficiency in the subject as a

fossilised body of knowledge but also to achieve the ability to critically apply the knowledge to rapidly changing socio-cultural environments.

Given this ecological approach to linguistics, one should not disregard the general socio-political and educational context in Kuwait and other Gulf countries. Factors that may contribute to learners' attitudes towards English language teaching specifically and pedagogy in general are politics, religion and social stratification. Assessing data obtained during random household interviews of 1500 Kuwaitis in 1988, 1994 and 1996 (Meyer, Rizzo & Ali, 2007), Kuwaitis have become more open in regards to the West's democratic values through extensive media channels since the Gulf War of 1991. This may indicate that the English language may be considered by Kuwaitis to be a positive tool of communication with the global environment. Meanwhile, the citizens of Kuwait (as well as residents of other Arab countries) manage to keep a critical eye on the changes introduced through Western economic and cultural expansion to the Gulf region (see El-Khairi, 2010; Karam, 2010) by putting forward the idea of national solidarity. In Kuwait specifically this upsurge in the sense of belonging and localised citizenship happened immediately upon liberation from Iraqi invaders in 1991 and was manifested in the educational field through the introduction of civics classes in all schools starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

Furthermore, an analysis of Islam as affecting the proliferation of Western-style economies and non-Arab languages (Karmani, 2005; Zia, 2010) has revealed that religion plays an important role for Muslims in their language practices. A survey conducted by Mohd-Asraf (2005) in three rural Malaysian English classes, in which the majority of students were Muslim, has demonstrated that, on the one hand, the Islamic ideology encourages believers to learn languages, as this is one of many ways to acquire new knowledge to please God. However, on the other hand, many Muslims feel that the English language may threaten their religious identity in the light of the events of 9/11

and the global anti-terrorist campaign. This assumption is supported by negative opinions expressed by Jordanian, Kuwaiti, and Saudi Arabian leaders concerning the drop of Islamic studies in favour of English in some Arab Gulf schools – an initiative to this effect took place in Qatar in 2003 sponsored by the U. S. government (Glasser, 2003). Indignation of some religious authorities was directed at the attempt of foreign political institutions to ‘buy’ educational reforms in the Arabic-medium, Islamic contexts.

Finally, the important role of social status and community networks in the Arab world in general and Kuwait specifically has been highlighted by many (Akbar, 2007; Schaub, 2000). A learner’s attitude to studying English may be affected by location (urban versus rural districts), family background (a place of origin, belonging to the country’s elite, etc.) and wealth. To summarise, the diversity of opinions and voices on the issue of English being studied in Arab-speaking countries have all contributed to the concept of “linguistic dualism” (Clarke, 2007; Findlow, 2006) in which the English language is posited as a signifier of Western lifestyle while the Arabic language celebrates strong connections with religion and traditional, locally oriented ideologies. Analysis of ecological issues in regards to the philosophy and methodology of TESOL in Arab countries in general, and Kuwait specifically, will be continued below.

### **Critical Epistemology**

Critical epistemology rejects the ‘expert’ knowledge (Cameron, 2002). Instead of objectifying knowledge as a preset code polarised along the axis of ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ and transmitted across the hierarchy from ‘top’ down, the critical epistemology emphasises the value of the concept ‘negotiation for meaning’ (Block, 2002; Tollefson, 2000). In this context, information is derived from many sources, including personal experiences, communal practices, academic curriculum, and mass media; in order to be consciously re-organised and analysed. Data is processed as a flow

of multiple – often incompatible – facts and issues arranged in a flexible system for the sake of cooperation with a wider context.

In regards to English language instruction, contemporary critical pedagogy enables learners to “use [English] for their cognitive, academic and curricular development” (Wallace, 2002, p. 104) which implies productive socialisation with other members of their educational network. Furthermore, although the critical school of thought is aware of students’ need to apply knowledge in contemporary competitive environments, it disagrees with the neo-conservative paradigm of bureaucratisation and pragmatism of learning. The nature of this conflict is clarified by Block’s (2002) critique of the phenomenon of “McCommunication” or “technologization of discourse” (p. 131) that manifests through highly formal educational values of efficiency, calculability, predictability, control, and standardization (Block, 2002). These values are problematic to the goal of learning in that they are more products of the consumer market rather than of education, they establish a one-way exchange of information from the teacher to the learner, and they contribute to imposition of dominant ideologies into the learning context. As research by Bax (2006) has demonstrated, formal approaches to English language education (outdated texts of Bahraini secondary school course books that were found to be irrelevant to students’ lives and contemporary sociolinguistic reality) could result in replacing conscious and skill-oriented learning by drills and memory tests that left students unprepared to function in real-life environments.

In regards to Kuwait, although the guidebook for heads of ELT departments (Ministry of Education, 2007) provides some elements of the conceptual framework that supports language education – the dyad of linguistic and cultural knowledge, taxonomy of cognitive objectives (Bloom, 1956), and communicative ideology of instruction – there is no evidence of how these ideas are being applied in real-life classroom settings. It seems that Kuwaiti policymakers and curriculum planners are often unable to reflect

on critical epistemology since they have to remediate the burning problems of poor academic and literacy standards that are observed within the population of Kuwaiti. Due to the overload put on teachers that have to manage excessively large classes (Al-Darwish, 2006; Al-Yaseen) the problems of management and lesson planning receive primary importance while philosophical underpinnings recede to the background (Almodaires, 2009).

As an English teacher at one of Kuwait's educational institutions for over six years, I am not satisfied with the narrow and in many ways outdated ideological system delineated in the national educational manuals. Recent breakthroughs in regards to language models, as well as in ELT philosophy and methodology show that foreign language learning should not be detached from moulding literacy in students' mother tongue – this principle is totally lacking in the existing Kuwaiti context. I am sure TESOL stakeholders are required to develop both cognitive (referring to the ability to think and acquire new information) and metacognitive (pertaining to the skills of knowledge management) strategies in order to survive in a multicultural and highly competitive environment in terms of the necessary skills and abilities.

For this reason I have organised the current study as informed by the social constructionist theory (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 2003; Hibberd, 2005; Pring, 2004) which provides the lens through which human knowledge acquisition and meaning creation are seen as a socially accomplished activity. In the constructionist theory, reification, or individual construction of reality, is made meaningful through collaborative efforts. Furthermore, the constructionist perspective stresses the importance of culture as an intellectual and ideological framework to guide human interactions. From this perspective, socialisation and learning will be characterised by fluidity, socio-linguistic heterogeneity and context-boundedness. In researching an array of meanings associated with English language learning in Kuwait, the social constructionist paradigm will be

utilised to examine reactions of Kuwaiti students and teachers of the national education system in regards to ELT. I hope that this specific epistemological frame will encourage my colleagues to look at their professional routines as a continuous reflective activity and to apply theoretical knowledge about English language learning and related language policies to their real-life classroom environments with the aim of improving the status quo.

### **Critical Methodology**

As far as conceptual breakthroughs of the critical pedagogy call for enhanced tools to introduce innovations to the real-class learning environment are concerned, recent decades have incurred several notable attempts such as the work of Pennycook (2001a) and Ramanathan (2002) about the role of teacher training as a critical reflective, collaborative process. The epistemological and methodological underpinnings of critical pedagogy are eloquently summarised by Guilherme (2002), who has conducted an exhaustive analysis of critical pedagogy as rooted in previous educational epistemologies. The researcher has stated that the ultimate goal of the teaching and learning process in the new millennium is to mould “critical and committed citizens, capable of establishing personal and professional relationships across cultures in the search for individual and collective improvement and empowerment, at different levels” (p. 1). However there is little empirical evidence of critical methodologies actually being deployed in classrooms.

One of the examples of critical methodologies as being implemented practically can be found in Bax’s (2006) ethnographic study undertaken with the goal of devising the English language syllabuses to be used in Bahraini secondary schools. An additional aim of the study was to improve efficiency of the national English language examination system from the perspective of skill testing. Data were derived from lesson observation, researcher’s field notes, documentation analysis (reports, course books and

examination papers both in Arabic and English) as well as interviews with and questionnaires from teachers, students and policy-makers; the inquiry into the issue of syllabus enhancement received a reflexive and collaborative turn that helped to identify the weak points of the existing syllabus and to delineate possible improvements. The critical eye taken by participants of this study shows that they had already believed, the existing English language syllabus to be inefficient, most likely because it had failed to train students in practical language skills such as reading unfamiliar texts of different genres and writing texts to provide a communicative perspective (reports, letters, summaries, etc.). A longitudinal study grounded in the Bahraini educational environment combined with evaluation of some other English language course books, Bax (2006) and the participants of his research managed to create a draft syllabus, which seemed to fit the goal of scaffolding students' knowledge to use various language skills in real-life situations. The ecological perspective on language learning (i.e., taking into account the needs and ideologies of the local community together with academic goals) has added value to the project.

A similar approach is found in Dudzik's (2007) report on the issue of the countrywide introduction of an innovative competency-based English curriculum in Djibouti. Through interviewing local officials and teachers, classroom observation and document analysis, Dudzik identified key elements of the reformed ELT curriculum that can be called critically oriented: learners' motivation towards successful achievement, combination of skills and coherently organised meaningful tasks, integration of local realities into course books and classroom discussions, and the whole process of learning aimed at learners' acquisition of practically useful competencies.

From these two examples, it is evident that critically minded policy-makers and educators attempt to establish the shared network of knowledge transmission and knowledge acquisition that can be described as the inclusive approach. Inclusivity—or

what Auerbach (2000) defined as ‘participatory learning’ – should not be confused with the oversimplified principle of learner-centred participation, in which the student is positioned above the teacher as a self-sustaining agent. Quite on the contrary, the teacher acts as a facilitator and mediator of a creative synthesis of learners’ backgrounds and abilities within the frameworks of the curriculum. The learning process itself acquires a new orientation towards participants’ knowledge and experiences, which are transmitted between the teacher and the students in a dialogic, collaborative effort.

Lamentably, I cannot cite Kuwaiti methodological approaches to ELT as critical or revolutionary, especially in the few previous decades. Guidelines published by the Ministry of Education (2007) listed a set of aims, goals, and objectives that should be fulfilled within each of three learning domains (Bloom, 1956) – cognitive (various types of knowledge), affective (positive motivation and attitudes), and psychomotor (various skills) – at each stage of the educational pipeline. This methodological system contained no traces of the instruments and resources that would link theory to learning context. Pedagogues had to rely on their previous experiences by planning lessons and choosing appropriate methods and instruments. So far as instruments are concerned, judging from Al-Darwish’s (2006) and Al-Yaseen’s (2000) reports, Kuwaiti teachers faced problems with using modern IT resources to add creativity during instruction and facilitate knowledge acquisition. Textbooks that were issued for the United Arab Emirates failed to address Kuwaiti-specific sociocultural realities which added additional complexity to the local TESOL framework while contextualisation of methodological elements was believed to be extremely important by contemporary researchers (Al-Shammari, Sharoufi & Yawkey, 2008). Fortunately, recent learning materials are updated so that to take into account the Kuwaiti specifics (see the *Background* chapter for details).

Since 1997, when the overview of Kuwait’s post-war national educational system was conducted by Al-Mutawa, researchers (Al-Majallah, 2007; Al-Sharaf, 2006;



Mohammad, 2008) keep repeating that national policymakers and pedagogues fail to adopt innovative methods due to various economic and sociocultural reasons; inadequate financing of public schools, gaps in curriculum planning, an astonishing shortage of professional educators, oversized classes, lack of learning resources, and an absence of programmes to increase teachers' awareness of innovative tools and practices. Teachers who participated in the above cited studies confessed that they felt severely restricted by the narrow, incoherent, and de-contextualised EFL curriculum. Recent attempts to perform an independent evaluation of education in the country (e. g., Bowman, 2008) refer to the system in general without any particular attention to language teaching – whether it is English or Arabic. While some researchers report about micro-projects dedicated to the implementation of some productive ELT methods in specific schools (e. g. direct instruction, Al-Shammari, Sharoufi & Yawkey, 2008), it is impossible to trace further deployment of these innovations. Moreover, considering the lack of contact between teachers and their supervisors (Al-Darwish, 2006; Almodaires, 2009; Al-Sharaf, 2006), the situation in regards to ELT methodology becomes especially dangerous.

### **Value of Resistance**

While the situation of ELT in Kuwait may seem grim, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Kuwait's education system remains totally passive and has lost hope to change things for the better. The idea of language as a transmitter of knowledge and culture as conveyed through available nationwide methodological guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2007) helps local agents to envisage a classroom as a social environment that is integrated into the broader socio-cultural and political context. Therefore the TESOL arena becomes a place where new power hierarchies are created, multiple meanings are negotiated, and various tools of cooperation or resistance are used.

The concept of resistance denotes “oppositional behaviour” which is more than “simply a reaction to powerlessness”, but rather “an expression of power that is fuelled by and reproduces the most powerful grammar of domination” (Giroux, 2001, p. 103). An interesting argument on the issue of resistance in ELT is observed in both Canagarajah (1999) and Wallace (2002). Canagarajah (1999) emphasised the importance of students’ ‘underlife’, which refers to learners’ everyday communicative practices which are deeply rooted in their social backgrounds and daily experiences, which in turn are affected by competing ideologies. The underlife is juxtaposed against the functions dictated by the streamlined curriculum marked by “the perceived lifelessness and reproductive tendencies” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 92). The claimed objectivity and restrictive oppression of the English language syllabi and courses — which are unaware of local cultures — is healed, in Canagarajah’s view, by the critical pedagogy equipped by the critical linguistic tools of “gaining a critical consciousness by resisting dominant discourses” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 31) and developing an awareness of socio-cultural contexts and rivalling ideological claims. Wallace (2002) disagrees with Canagarajah (1999) on the point:

[W]e should acknowledge and respect but not appropriate or incorporate the underlife ... of our students; ... it is not our role to nurture those sites; ... the concerns of teachers should be less with personal or local empowerment than with a longer-term challenge to social inequity in a wider sense. (Wallace, 2002, p. 111)

In other words, according to the researcher, the mission of TESOL is to mediate the conflict between the global and the local aspects of learners’ lives by enabling students to actively participate in knowledge acquisition. Wallace (2002) furthered this point by stating that resistance is “a considered, reflected upon, rational stance, where earlier instinctive responses have been subjected to analysis” in order to orient learners “from

knee-jerk hostile response to reflective, considered judgement” (p. 112). Thus, the process of learning literate English as the realm that distances itself from local varieties and ideologies, in Wallace’s belief, involves no oppression from the centre, but rather widening the set of resources for empowerment and meaningful policymaking.

Judging from empirical research, Anglicisation of national education systems can result in either nationalism or cosmopolitan pluralism as two distinctive forms of resistant behaviours, as has happened in Japan (Kubota, 2002) where public opinion is torn between the policy of *kokusaika* (internationalisation) – aggressive imposition of English as a second language to convey Japanese ideology to the rest of the world – and nationalist ambitions that call for translating all teaching materials to the mother tongue. In case of Kuwait, code-switching as the popular practice within the population of younger nationals (Akbar, 2007) can also be described as the original manifestation of resistance. Kuwaiti students react as such to the hybridity of their sociocultural environment by trying to keep in pace with rapid modernisation, as delivered through the medium of English, and simultaneously to maintain relationships with local traditional ideologies, as expressed through Arabic. Relying on the fact that this specific type of resistant behaviour became popular also with Kuwaiti female teenagers, who are expected to reject anything that might conflict with established social order, Akbar (2007) has concluded that code-switching in Kuwait aims at remodelling both linguistic and sociocultural ideologies.

Generally speaking, in the Arab-speaking world, resistance to English may be caused by various factors. Research by Al-Darwish (2006) and Al-Yaseen (2000) indicate that young learners may be bored by constant repetitions of the same phrases during lessons, by the lack of games and by the loads of grammar drills. They also may feel discomfort while reading texts that are not relevant to their everyday environments (Asfoor, 2008). Students at higher grades may lose motivation for studying English if

they view their upcoming career as being disconnected with this language (Malallah, 2000). All experts whose works about Kuwaiti realities are cited throughout this chapter, stress that the incompetence of teachers is one of the main reasons for frustration and resistance towards learning English demonstrated by students. What is clear is that this knowledge of the problem should be turned into a conscious act of effective policy improvement via analysis and reflection. Taking this into account, the next section will look closer at the phenomenon of teacher training under the challenging contemporary EFL/ESL conditions.

### **English Language Teacher Preparation**

English language teacher preparation can be regarded as training and education. According to Richards (1997), second language teacher preparation as training (the micro-approach) consists of “discrete and trainable skills” and that as education (the macro-approach) is aimed at “clarifying and elucidating the concepts and thinking processes that guide the effective second language teacher” (p. 14). The micro-approach pays attention to the low-inference teaching skills which are easily observable and quantifiable (i. e. the extent of L2 usage in classroom, employment of various types of questions during teacher-student interaction, ability to write legibly on the blackboard, etc.), while the macro-approach focuses on more complex behaviours (i. e. classroom management, appropriate structuring of tasks, etc.). Tarone and Allwright (2005) add the third dimension (besides training and education) which is teacher development concerned with understanding or “something beyond merely having a particular skill or having a certain piece of knowledge” (p. 7). This third component resides both on training and education and is constructed continuously throughout the whole teaching career.

Ellis (1997) expresses the same idea about the complex nature of English language teacher preparation using a different terminology. He talks about experiential

and awareness-raising teacher learning practices. While the former gets student teachers involved in actual teaching, the latter should “develop the student teacher’s conscious understanding of the principles underlying second language teaching and/or the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons” (Ellis, 1997, p. 27). He suggests that the two kinds of practices when used in a balanced way should form teacher preparation procedures which constitute the general methodology of training sessions. Ellis’ conceptual framework is similar to those of Richards’ (1997) as well as Tarone and Allwright’s (2005) in highlighting the implications of training and education in teacher preparation. However, both Richards (1997) and Ellis (1997) do not cover in depth the concept of development which is present in Tarone and Allwright’s (2005) description of teacher learning.

To avoid possible confusion in terminology associated with implications of training, education and development, contemporary researchers often prefer the term “knowledge base” when analysing English language teacher preparation. It is argued that any teacher learning programme should be based on teacher knowledge base which refers to “the repertoire of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers require to effectively carry out classroom practices” (Fradd & Lee, 1998, pp. 761-2). According to the classical model of teacher knowledge base by Lee Shulman (2002), it comprises subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Content knowledge refers to the arrangement of data relevant to the subject in the teacher’s mind. Meanwhile, pedagogical training enables teachers to deliver information in a coherent, learner-oriented manner. Finally, curricular knowledge refers to the teacher’s awareness of the curriculum as constructed from contextual requirements. As Fradd and Lee (1998) observed, theoretical implications may either comply or compete with real-life educational policies. However, both conceptual and empirical elements of

teacher knowledge base share the goal of synthesising subject matter and pedagogical skills to serve diverse student audiences.

A TESOL knowledge base lacks a uniform description, as component elements (e.g., the teacher's status, the learner's motivation, technological access to resources) vary worldwide. Given multiple discussions on the issues of globalism, heteroglossia, and multilingualism as well as the development of critical theories, it is not surprising that the English language teacher knowledge base is continually refined, modified, and revised (Freeman, 2007; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Troudi, 2005; Yates & Muchisky, 2003).

An easily observable change has occurred in regards to terminology. Whereas earlier models of teacher knowledge base operated based on the three notions of knowledge, skills (i.e., practical algorithms of transferring knowledge in classroom settings), and attitudes (i.e., operation of learning objectives and resources within the educational system), the revolutionary matrix has replaced the latter of the three—due to it being a set of “fuzzy, usually ill-defined, perhaps indefinable ideas and concepts”—with the term dispositions to cover “the gap between intention and actual behaviour” (Freeman, 2007, p. 6). The adepts of the revisited teacher knowledge base proclaimed that the new vocabulary has manifested the shift in pedagogical research toward teachers' contextual experiences as revealed through their habits or experientially grounded, daily practices and rules of thumb and micro-scale rituals in treating both the learning resources and learners.

It is interesting that the new model of teacher knowledge base has received equivocal evaluations. For example, Yates and Muchisky (2003) concluded that the word ‘language’ was rarely present in the revolutionary texts; instead, terms related to culture, social context, and critical awareness prevailed. Relying on this word count, the researchers criticised the emerging emphasis on English language teachers' socio-

cultural orientation as emptying the core value of a profession in which “an understanding of how language is organized and how languages are learned is fundamental to becoming a competent language teacher” (Yates & Muchisky, 2003, p.138). According to the authors, a suspected preoccupation of Freeman and Johnson (1998) and other ‘revolutionaries’ with placing individual English language teachers within the social context without, seemingly, a close look at the language-related core of ELT ultimately contributed to the marginalisation of English and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In contrast, Troudi (2005) argued that the teacher knowledge base as enriched by socio-cultural implications encouraged English language educators to envisage language as “more than just form and structure” and acquire a broader perspective on classroom routines as “not limited to how, where and when to use linguistic structures” (p.116). According to Troudi, individual agents should not be placed outside the social context.

What is left behind in these theoretical discussions and debates is the appropriation of the teacher knowledge base concept in the case of TESOL by educators who are non-native English speakers and who operate in the ‘outer’ and ‘expanding’ circles of English language usage. The problem was addressed by Seidlhofer (1999) in her interviews of EFL and ESL teachers, when she observed that the teachers were “double agents” (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 235) in the sense that they are immersed both in the local and English language cultures. She also acknowledged a necessity for them to use “double talk” (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 236) so that they could get command of authentic English as the target of TESOL pedagogy and make this normative English intelligible for pupils. She observed that this results in stressful efforts to adjust authentic texts that are hardly suitable for the classroom. The researcher determined that, for the teachers, solid and creative appropriation of the existing methodology was the most effective way to cover the gap between language authenticity and pragmatic

utilisation (see the case of Djibouti in Dudzik, 2007, or the case of critical reflection over learning materials in the UAE in Clarke, 2007). Finally, TESOL teachers should be trained in “double think” (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 236) to critically assess the complex phenomena that affect English language teaching. Unfortunately, teachers’ ability (and necessity) to live and work in two competing linguistic and cultural worlds of the source and target languages/cultures is mostly silenced by theorists of teacher knowledge base. It seems that this double agency/critical knowledge, should form the fourth element of the teacher knowledge base system that is still left outside the officially acknowledged conceptualisation.

Some optimism in this direction is supported by Ramanathan’s (2002) study. Ramanathan argues that one of the most important objectives of language teacher training is advanced literacy that comprises both mastery in reading and writing skills beyond the secondary school level and the ability to consciously analyse the issues and disciplines that contribute to language education. This challenging task is referred to as meta-awareness in thought collectives (TCs) or teachers’ professional communities. According to Ramanathan (2002), educators’ meta-awareness emerges when “they begin talking and thinking about how their TCs function and are sustained, and how as teachers they individually contribute to the overall functioning and sustenance of TCs” (p. 7). The activity is made possible through critical reflection that, in its turn, is a powerful instrument of critical pedagogy which shapes TESOL nowadays. Ramanathan (2002) has stressed that such practice is available not only for the in-service but also for trainee teachers. Some possible methods to train oneself in meta-awareness are acquiring practical teaching skills, writing theses instead of passing compulsory examinations, participating in colloquiums, and so on. Examples from the United Arab Emirates (Clarke, 2007; Clarke & Otaky, 2006) demonstrate that trainee teachers are



eager to get involved into reflective and problematizing practices despite ideological and institutional constraints.

One more important point should be added here in regards to the exhaustiveness of the three-layer classical model of teacher knowledge base as the corner stone of L2 teacher preparation. In the corpus of literature reviewed for the current chapter, Cutri's (2000) essay and Johnston's (2003) book discussed an issue of the moral and spiritual element of the teaching profession. The researchers have stressed that neither the contemporary critical pedagogy with its reflection over dominant ideologies, social injustice, and diverse socio-cultural context; nor democratic policy making can guide people through the challenging process of the deconstruction of oppressive realities without the aid of spirituality or spiritual morality.

As complex phenomena, morality and spirituality function in learning contexts at both the extrapersonal (involving critical analysis of political and economic implications of education) and transpersonal (a shared framework of people's aspirations, desires, and idiosyncrasies) levels of teaching. As Johnston (2003) has stressed, morality or a "set of a person's beliefs which are evaluative in nature" (p. 6) as applied to learning contexts should encourage a teacher not only to treat all students equally or justly but also to practice motivational displacement or the ability to understand the learner's motivations and realities. Moral sensitiveness and spirituality are not traits with which a teacher is born, but products of lifelong critical reflection and continuous efforts aimed at expanding one's intellectual and spiritual scope. As such, Cutri (2000) has recommended that teachers investigate artefacts of the surrounding socio-political context in order to incorporate the spiritual element into their professional repertoire. It is worth noting here that morality and spirituality as promising elements of teacher knowledge base remain a largely unexplored terrain that is poorly investigated in practice.

Overall, teacher knowledge base is a general construct comprising empirical and theoretical research of the issues such as teacher's knowledge, beliefs, values, learning strategies, and social functions, as well as standards for designing English language teacher preparation programmes. The knowledge-base framework provides a coherent and multi-faceted system to describe what L2 teachers should know about their profession, subject-content and learners, while specific practices and activities to deliver knowledge to those interested vary depending on the social and learning context. I analysed Kuwaiti teacher preparation programmes as general frameworks aimed at equipping trainee teachers with relevant knowledge to deliver English under the conditions of globalization and social heteroglossia, while the methods/activities/practices for moulding future teachers' practical skills to introduce the English language as a multi-functional sociocultural and linguistic medium remained unexplored due to the specifics of my research design. Therefore in the further sections of my dissertation I will talk about English language teacher preparation in Kuwait as exemplified in two programmes (at KU and CBE) featuring specific knowledge base components.

In Kuwait, judging from the report by Al-Sharaf (2006), the issue of teacher knowledge base is kept to old fashioned standards. In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion (1991), the Ministry of Education had to face too many burning problems besides allowing student and practicing teachers to enhance their meta-awareness or introduce criticality into their professional life. As a director of the Student Teaching Practice Center in the College of Education at KU, Al-Sharaf (2006), however, did not evaluate the situation as hopeless. In his witnessing eye, several improvements have been implemented since 1996 in regards to teachers' training in subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. He recommended, though, that policymakers should attend to the problem of inadequate field training of future educators who have

to practice in very stressful environments, lacking adequate supervision and consultation.

Furthermore, according to Al-Darwish (2006) who has interviewed three Kuwaiti teachers on the issue of their professional training, educators in Kuwait are given solid knowledge on pedagogical and subject theory but desperately need more training to be able to work effectively in classrooms. Local teachers and policymakers would need to unify their efforts in order to enhance the state of affairs in regards to teacher preparation. The following section will show how this is not the only task for the stakeholders of the Kuwaiti educational system. The time has come to be concerned not only with the quality of teacher preparation and education but also with the status of Arabic in relation to English which is rapidly expanding into the local sociocultural environment.

### **Language Policymaking**

Language is not merely a means of communication, but also “a collection of symbols used to transmit cultural norms and values” (Holmarsdottir, 2001, p. 382). Given this, in regard to education, language as a transmitter of cultures and ideologies may serve either a dialogic framework or an instrument of oppression (in the cases of ethnocentrism, linguistic imperialism, or enforced monolingualism). Language policy as an array of judgements concerning language rights and accessibility, as well as the simultaneous functioning of specific languages and language varieties within the particular national community, are very important concepts. Two well-known authorities in language planning (LP)— Tollefson (2000, 2002) and Ricento (2006) regarded attachment of power and prestige to a particular ethnic group or language as the factor contributing to discrimination and genocide. The threat of destroying sociocultural and linguistic relationships in multiethnic and multilingual contexts encouraged researchers to examine the phenomenon of LP both in theory and practice.

Phillipson (2003) defined language policymaking as consisting of three intermingled factors: the status of a language in a given sociocultural context, the range of methods and resources that policymakers utilise to affect the status of the language(s), and acquisition planning, which is the procedure and conceptual framework of how language education is organised. Depending on the goals and methods, language policies can be categorised into (1) permissive language defence – when members of a given community are allowed to use some other languages besides the official one in support of freedom of speech; (2) active language defence – when measures are undertaken to raise the prestige and value of a disadvantaged language; and (3) preventive, proactive language defence – the legitimised introduction of a sole language as the medium of instruction and public activity. Examples of these policies observed in Iceland, Malaysia, Israel, and in the Middle East (Egypt, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates) will be provided.

Tollefson (2000, 2002) regarded the goal of the adequate language policy as conflict management – to increase the efficiency of communication between the stakeholders, as well as to nurture and reinforce democratic pluralism in multiparty environments. Ricento (2006) also highlighted the need to continuously re-examine and re-construct the established power hierarchies to avoid privileging a particular ethnic group/language in the prejudice of other members/elements of the social network. Careful language planning to balance competing languages and re-organisation of general social, economic, and political frameworks by adding localised objectives will fully avoid this issue.

Ideal language policymaking and planning should be guided by the principles of holism – being aware of the constituent forms of diversity, linguistic human rights and equity. The goal of this process should be establishing productive links between educational communities and other policymakers such as politicians, curriculum

planners, academia, and parents; as well as the probable future employers of current language learners. For example, McGroarty (2002) suggested creating a framework of active pluralism so that participants of the policymaking process were able “to go beyond the common store of knowledge, once it is mastered, to pursue additional goals in line with individual interests and capacities” (p. 22). This echoes a dialogical approach suggested by Orland-Barak et al. (2004) who called for creating the culture of “dialogues of practice” (p. 335) that would direct an exchange of concepts and practical experiences in order to establish a common understanding of needs and desired outcomes of language education in a given community.

The validity of these proposals has been approved in reality, given the rise of the subsidiary principle (Phillipson, 2003), which delegates responsibility in decision-making to local actors rather than to higher authorities who are unaware of specifics in heterogeneous educational contexts. Meanwhile, the role of the government is to allocate the resources needed to implement collaboratively decided-upon actions, and to ensure coherence and equity in the dialogic process.

The section below will analyse various language policies that have been implemented in the outer and expanding circles. Among these countries, Malaysia follows preventive, proactive language defence; Iceland reverts to active language defence; and Israel practices permissive language defence. The practices of Egypt, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates will be referred to under the umbrella name of “Middle East”. These vignettes of linguistic policymaking will be examined to build a case for Kuwait.

As it has been stated throughout the chapter, Kuwait’s sociocultural and educational environment houses multiple problems concerning the quality of learning and teaching. The Anglicisation of the academic curricular and the increasing marginalisation of Modern Standard Arabic as a medium of scholarly research and

literacy warrants more time and effort dedicated to restoring the sociolinguistic balance in the country. My personal observations from the data of how English has managed to penetrate every sphere of Kuwait's public and individual life, is worth questioning. The inattentiveness of the local community to language planning and the insufficiency of research concerning the issues are disturbing. It is hoped that further analysis of the country's situation will help to initiate a collaborative action programme that would improve the quality of English language learning without endangering the status of Arabic.

### **Trends from Malaysia, Iceland, and Israel**

The education system in Malaysia has always been highly "fragmented" (Nalliah & Thiagarajah, 2002, p. 442) and elitist (see also Gill, 2005; Schneider 2003). Prior to 1957, educational establishments using Malay, Chinese, and Tamil vernacular media were regarded as somewhat inferior to those using English media, guaranteeing neither an adequate career nor a successful social promotion to graduates of those schools. As a result, the English language evolved into a marker of privilege—"an asset, opening roads to higher status or specific commercial options" (Schneider, 2003, p. 246). It remained a compulsory subject in all types of schools (i.e., both national schools and national vernacular schools), not to mention institutions and universities.

In the 1950s, the local Malay government hastily proclaimed the superiority of Bahasa Melayu to English, and the mother tongue for just one ethnic community within a multilingual nation became the single official language. The extorted monolingualism resulted in interethnic conflicts and violation of sociocultural links that neither improved the balance in society nor supported the prestige of the Malaysian language. One challenge brought about by the nationalist reform was the modernisation of Bahasa Melayu to make it "an intellectual language" by enriching it with increased "educational capital" (Gill, 2005, p. 248). Malay had such a limited vocabulary for academia in

comparison to English that over half a million new Malay terms were created between 1972 and 1988. Additionally, Malaysian students who did speak English demonstrated poor knowledge of the language because graduates of different educational establishments arrived at the secondary schooling stage with unequal proficiency in English. Although English lost its status as the primary medium of instruction, it continued functioning as a signifier of social prestige and better job opportunities. This put Malaysian students at a marked disadvantage in science and business.

Since the 1990s, the government of Malaysia has taken a series of steps to heal the problems caused by affirmative monolingualism. This included the introduction of English in pre-university classes in 2000, an increase in the number of private institutions of higher learning and partnership programmes with foreign universities, the establishment of English medium schools in 2002, the teaching of mathematics and science in the first year of all types of schools in English since 2003, and the teaching of half of all subjects at the Malaysian Public University in English since 2004. Additional innovations include government-sponsored programmes for teachers' retraining at the Malaysian English Language Teaching Centre, publication of new syllabi, and attempts to align the linguistic policy across various medium schools through the simultaneous introduction of mother tongue and English at the earliest stages of children's development. This last innovation sought to achieve the so-called "Vision Schools" that aim to eliminate "racial polarization" (Nalliah & Thiyagarajah, 2002, p. 452) among Chinese and Tamil learners in comparison to the Malay ones.

The most serious mistake of policymakers in Malaysia was their denial of how much time it would take to reform the national educational system and mobilise local resources to adjust it for the sake of rapidly changing sociolinguistic settings. This approach to language policymaking can be called "preventive and proactive" since

regulation of languages was performed by authoritarian, prohibitive methods without collaborative discussion between all interested parties.

The Malaysian model is useful to trace the after-effects of language policies that are undertaken under the banners of modernity and the global market. Similar to Malay, Iceland has preserved the native tongue, ensuring that all public discourse and schools use it, yet the country acknowledges the growth of English as a global language and has made learning English part of compulsory schooling.

Iceland has been confronting the rapid spread of English as a global language since 1944. According to Hilmarsson-Dunn (2006), following the global language systematisation paradigm developed by de Swaan (1991), Icelandic functions as the national or ‘central’ language in Iceland since public discourse and the transmittance of knowledge occurs in it. Danish and English languages, which are studied as compulsory subjects at school, are regarded as ‘supracentral’ languages in terms of providing the so-called “central codes” (de Swaan, 1991, p. 317) to the national language. Danish establishes a sociolinguistic link between Icelandic and the Scandinavian environment, whereas English creates a bridge to the other European territories. The latter may also be treated as a ‘hypercentral’ language as it is used across national boundaries.

The approach to language policy in Iceland is overtly bottom-up, concentrating on preserving the national identity through the minority national language.

Holmarsdottir (2001) has described this strategy as follows:

Iceland’s language policy is not only a governmental policy, it is a policy that comes from the grassroots with the government and official institutions viewing their job as one of service to the people of Iceland and not simply policy implementers. Likewise, Icelanders are very proud of their language and are extremely determined to continually develop and preserve the language for future generations (p. 391).



A language that has remained almost unchanged since the Medieval Ages, Icelandic is remarkable for its absence of dialects and regional varieties, creating an outstanding example of the monolithic linguistic body. Centralised language planning by The Icelandic Language Council “ensure[s] that Icelandic contains the necessary terminology to function in the modern world” (Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2006, p. 296).

In contrast to the mother tongue, English is viewed as the “dominant, invasive linguistic force” (Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2006, p. 295) contributing to the oppression and disintegration of the national culture and identity. Iceland’s measures to save the integrity of the nation and to provide the mother tongue with instruments to function in the contemporary technologized and global environment looks less disastrous than the Malaysian approach in terms of both linguistic rights and power relations. However, Iceland should not be taken as a universal model promoting isolationism and protectionism: the restricted use of foreign languages in Iceland undermines the competitiveness of the nation in the global market and decreases the probability of sharing the uniqueness and richness of the local culture with the worldwide community.

Iceland’s decisions are helpful for Kuwait in the sense that they demonstrate the benefits of maintaining the standard of literacy – in Kuwait (as well as in the Arab region overall) this element is rapidly degrading. Asfoor (2008) has indicated that the media is moving away from classical Arabic towards the local dialects which conflict with each other, thus deteriorating the integrity of the classical version of Arabic. In addition, Arabic language curricular are generally outdated and fail to keep up with the fast pace of modernity, resulting in an increased loss of interest. Politicians and educators should get involved in preserving and reigniting the youths’ connections with the roots of Arabic. The Icelandic case can teach Kuwaitis to restore the treasure of Arabic by preserving its gold standard and worthiness.

A far more contradictory picture emerges in Israel, where the population is less monolithic than in Iceland, and, in terms of multilingualism, is more similar to Malaysia. Instruction in all five types of schools (state secular, state religious, ultra orthodox, communal settlement, and Arab, as established under the State Education Law, 1953) as well as public discourse, is conducted in modern Hebrew, the official national language. This is a product of “speech revival” in that it “combines a variety of earlier forms with elements of different contemporary languages” (Ben-Rafael, 2000, p. 179). In this sense, Hebrew differs from both the Malaysian and Icelandic languages because, more adjusted to contemporary settings, Hebrew is orientated toward technology and globalised geopolitics and economy.

Once one of the three official languages under the British Mandate (1922-1948), together with Hebrew and Arabic, English has survived in contemporary Israeli settings as an important professional medium in the spheres of IT, law, medicine, science, tourism, and trade (Spolsky, 1998). It is conceptualised as “a window to the world” (Leshem & Trafford, 2006, p. 641), an efficient tool of “international communication and ... economic and occupational advancement in Israel and abroad” (Ezra, 2007, p. 272), and a cultural marker that “differentiates the privileged from the underprivileged” (Ben-Rafael, 2000, p. 181). Attitudes toward English in Israeli society differ depending on degrees of religious orthodoxy (Baumel, 2003) and ethnic backgrounds (Leshem & Trafford, 2006). However, the Israeli educational system has reacted sufficiently to changing trends in English language teaching by defining its role as the ‘first foreign language’ and developing a new national English curriculum in 2001.

In Israel, local languages seem to be preserved without violating the heterogeneity of diverse sociocultural communities within the nation, as has happened in Malaysia. There is also no evidence of a centripetal ideological and linguistic system as seen in Iceland, which relies exclusively on inner resources and sooner or later would

not be able to sustain itself without aggressive top-down steps to prevent alienating the global family. Both Hebrew and Arabic are plethoric and viable languages that respond to the requirements posed within various social realms. As such, the case of Israel is valuable for tracing political and ideological motives that underline English policymaking in local contexts. Israel succeeded in retaining the status of its mother tongue despite many English-speaking expatriates coming to the country to seek employment. The local government deliberately decided to maintain such a high status of Hebrew that foreign workers had to study it as a requirement for getting permanent residence. In Arab countries, introducing English as the lingua franca was less consuming in terms of time and money than making the incoming workforce study Arabic (Karmani, 2005). Therefore, a comparison of Israel and Kuwait in regards to language policymaking may provide important clues to understanding the repercussions of economic reforms and ideological campaigns.

### **Trends from the Middle East**

Unlike Malay and Icelandic, Arabic is well adjusted to functioning as the language of science and to coining new terms. However, some Arab governments prefer to overlook the flexibility and lexical richness of the Arabic language, having yielded to the lure and pressure of English as it rapidly spreads in the region. For example, the government of Saudi Arabia –known for the largest contribution to GDP of the Gulf region – eagerly founds new programmes under the umbrella of studying English for academic purposes and sends students abroad to practice their foreign language skills. Salusbury (2009) stated that about 17,000 Saudi citizens annually joined the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme sponsored by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education to study at English-medium universities in Europe and Asia. A similar initiative is observed also in Kuwait where several programmes for high-school age nationals are run by the U. S. State Department and the America-Mideast Educational and Training

Services organisation (e.g., the Youth Exchange and Study [YES] programme, the ACCESS programme). Thus, the current pro-Anglophone language policy in Arab countries seems to be another form of investment for international organisations, while local governments are too enthusiastic about a chance to participate in the global network to think about the current troublesome position of Arabic.

The Arab-speaking countries of Egypt, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates share with Kuwait a range of common sociolinguistic factors. Egypt, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates did not gain independence until the middle or second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, each country having survived long-term British rule from 1882-1956; the end of World War I-1961; and the end of World War I-1961 (respectively). Lebanon experienced the same status under the protectorate of France (the end of World War I-1946). Since the 1970s, Egypt, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates have experienced an influx of English language uses via their involvement in economic, diplomatic, and military relationships with the United States. All four states are similar in the sense that they present multiethnic and multilingual communities, and the UAE is remarkable for its predominance of non-citizens; although Egypt, Kuwait, and Lebanon also host a large number of foreigners. Still, the majority of nationals in all four states speak Arabic as their mother tongue. The experience of Egypt, Lebanon, and the UAE, being similar to that of Kuwait, will provide helpful insights on English language policymaking in the Kuwaiti context.

In Egypt, English is introduced in the public schools as a compulsory foreign language starting in grade seven, and its teaching extends into the secondary level where students receive over 450 hours of compulsory instruction during the course. However, those whose parents are rich enough to send their children to private schools, where English is taught starting in the preschool level, have a competitive advantage in the job market over their less prosperous fellow nationals.

At the university level, English acquires an even more important status since university instruction of future scientists, engineers, doctors, pharmacists and representatives of other prestigious and well-paid professions is conducted in English. Schaub (2000) has witnessed that the majority of syllabi and course books are written in British English, which means that members of university communities must extensively use English both in their auditorium and in social interlocutions with fellow students. Schaub (2000) has mentioned that at the public university, students are not allowed to use Arabic words for scientific terms and should employ English equivalents, although the rest of classroom discussion may occur in Arabic. The situation is similar with teachers who use English terms in their otherwise Arabic discourse.

The overall attitude among Egyptians towards English in the educational system is positive and tolerant. A similarly tolerant attitude towards English in a country with a mainly Arabic-speaking population has been observed by Shaaban and Ghaith (2003) in Lebanon. The researchers used a questionnaire to measure attitudes toward Arabic, French, and English amongst one hundred seventy-six students enrolled at the American University of Beirut in 2000-2001. Although the participants of this study were not English language teachers like those who will be enrolled for the current research, Shaaban and Ghaith's findings are relevant to the current inquiry in that they address the experience of the Arabic-speaking population receiving formal education in the multilingual context. By the time they enter university, at which point all curriculum materials are written in English or French, Lebanese students have been studying either English or French for ten or more years, so they feel themselves as efficient bi- or even trilinguals, which gives them a sense of prestige and high self-image among relatives and peers. Shaaban and Ghaith (2003) have found that Lebanese students do not link national identity with language of instruction. While they use Arabic for socialising

outside the classroom, the interviewed Lebanese students indicated that they would prefer to receive instruction in either English or French.

According to Clarke and Otaky (2006), Findlow (2006), and Clarke (2007), attitudes about the English language as dominating the educational system of the United Arab Emirates are less tolerant than those observed in Egypt and Lebanon. So far as ELT is concerned, similar to Egypt and in contrast to Lebanon, school instruction until the tertiary level in the UAE takes place exclusively in Arabic (Findlow, 2006). However, at the university, students with majors in humanitarian disciplines such as Islamic religious law and Islamic studies, arts/humanities, social sciences, and education continue using Arabic as the main language of learning, while those studying subjects related to technology, commerce, or applied sciences become fully integrated into the English language curriculum.

The 1991 student riot at United Arab Emirates University (UAE) was followed by the 1992 Movement for the Arabisation of University Education, when the country experienced mass protests of nationalists against English as being the sole medium of instruction in the higher education system (Findlow, 2006). However, Findlow (2006) has mentioned an opposite viewpoint on the choice of the instructional medium that was expressed by the federal network of technical colleges named Higher Colleges of Technology – that the Arabisation trend was claimed as outdated and constraining the country's progress towards globalisation and economic well-being, which may be better promoted through English (see also Clark, 2007). To summarise, stakeholders of the UAE educational system express various opinions on the issue of English versus Arabic as they should be utilised for various learning goals, ranging from ultra-traditionalist protests against Western influences to cosmopolitan acceptance of foreign languages within academic and specifically, technological- and scientific-oriented professional communities.

The findings of Clarke and Otaky (2006) and Clarke (2007) show that future pedagogues from the UAE are eager to contribute to the emerging professional network of mutually constructed practices that involve raising the meta-awareness of teachers and burning issues such as the renovation of the ELT curriculum, more active introduction of the sociocultural element into language teaching, and presentation of various discourses that address the relationship between English and Arabic languages/cultures.

Practicing teachers who have already entered the professional pipeline – confess that the medium through which they received training directly affected the choice of the language they use in their work (Findlow, 2006). For example, an Arab teacher of natural sciences who has been instructed in the Northern American variety of English fails to deliver the subject in Arabic. This happens not only due to depletion of the pedagogue's non-English terminology store but also consequently to his undermined ability to organise instructional processes with the help of the native language. Concerning the fact that a large proportion of the national teacher workforce is trained in English-medium universities, UAE students are more likely to be taught in English than in their mother tongue, despite the public-school curriculum in the country being delivered in Arabic. Meanwhile, Arabic acquires the image of the 'inferior' medium and is steadily losing to English. Hence, both teachers and students are tacitly forced to believe in the superiority of English as the most efficient educational instrument – an assumption that is grieved about but nevertheless has not yet been refuted.

To conclude, situations in Egypt, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates show that students' attitudes towards English are controversial. This links the abovementioned contexts to the hybrid environment of Kuwait. On the one hand, the researchers cited above observed a high degree of enthusiasm towards English within the younger generations of nationals living in the Arab countries. The trend is explained

by a rapidly expanding global economy and competitive labour market in the region. Although these attitudes may be seen as positive if accompanied by critical reflection, they are likely to contribute to endangering the status of the Arab language, which is currently already undermined by an aggressive implementation of English as a basic tool of instruction in the public (and private) education system.

While there is a substantial body of literature regarding perceptions of English among Arab-speaking students and teachers, there is little research to shed light on the perceptions and reactions of other stakeholders of national education networks such as public authorities, curriculum planners, parents, and members of local communities. Therefore, whether Arab nations recognise the challenge posed by competing ideologies and epistemologies is questionable.

### **Building a Case for Kuwait**

The vignettes have demonstrated that the educational communities in the outer and expanding circles face a rapid proliferation of English as a language of economy, technology, and education. Language policies appropriated in Malaysia, Iceland, Israel and the Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates) vary in goals and methods but, despite this diversity, they can lend valuable clues to understanding the situation in Kuwait and to projecting possible directions for English-Arab policymaking. More than likely, Kuwaitis will always use both the standard and non-standard varieties of Arabic for various reasons (i.e., reading, writing, formal ceremonies, etc). Yet, the Anglicisation of the nationwide school curricular at the earliest stages of the learning pipeline (“First preparatory stage”, 2008) presents a serious problem, since it is not accompanied by parallel steps of raising children’s awareness of Arabic. Expansion of the Anglophone culture therefore negatively affects Arabic literacy. Furthermore, the national language in its classical form is not only endangered because all higher education institutions put students in a position calling



for an abandonment of Arabic, but is also endangered by the media, where the local Kuwaiti Dialect is gaining increased leverage in comparison to the classical norm.

In regard to competitiveness with English in terms of suitability for technologically and scientifically oriented settings, Arabic outperforms the Malaysian or Icelandic languages which cannot lend themselves to advancements in science or mathematics. The Arabic language is versatile and extremely rich in its linguistic and extralinguistic resources; thus, it can fulfil the role of *lingua franca* and serve as a transnational code (at least in the Middle East region) to promote socio-political and economic changes. It is therefore concerning, that local policymakers fail to sponsor the proliferation and popularisation of Arabic, preferring instead to demonstrate “resignation to inevitability” (Findlow, 2006, p. 33). In discussing the current state of Kuwaiti affairs concerning the English language, we should focus on the underpinnings of a deliberate ideology that encourages Kuwaitis to actively participate in globalisation by intentionally abandoning the ‘classical’ strand of the Arabic language for the sake of economic prosperity and social promotion. Understanding the Kuwaiti environment and the paradoxes of ELT in this region will provide a valuable research framework that will be helpful for TESOL practitioners worldwide.

## **Chapter Four: Methodology**

In this chapter I present a detailed description of the methodology chosen for the current research project. In the following sections I explain the conceptual framework utilised, delineate research questions, and provide details concerning the design of the study. Furthermore, I create a collective portrait of those who took part in the present investigation and justify my choice of data collection tools. I also specify the procedures undertaken to obtain and analyse the data. The logic followed in synthesising the bulk of the data is then presented in detail. Finally, the concluding sections concentrate on the issues related to trustworthiness and credibility followed by ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

### **Research Framework and Theoretical Justification**

The current three-phase, sequential mixed methods study aimed at obtaining deep insights from English language trainee teachers and lecturers concerning the status of English in Kuwait within the educational system. The study attempted to answer the following two research: 1) How is English perceived by Kuwait's future English language teachers? 2) What do the participants see as the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation?

Being guided by the interpretivist approach, I communicated with my participants to obtain "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 2003, p. 67). The present investigation viewed reality as being "a human construct" (Wellington, 2000, p. 16) consisting of human behaviours and reactions to phenomena as constantly reflected over and negotiated upon in the flow of interpersonal encounters and intellectual endeavours. In other words, the study took place in a social environment where my task was "to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 21) individual motives,

aspirations, and implications which contributed to the respondents' utilisation of the English language and professional training.

Interpretivism allowed me to effectively use empirical data that were collected in natural, everyday environments inhabited by research participants. The goal of my research could not be fulfilled if I had chosen the positivist framework with its requirement to follow the pre-determined theoretical guidelines under artificially created, controllable conditions. On the contrary, I understood my task as “treating a societal member's practical circumstances [...] as matters of theoretic interest” (Garfinkel, 2003, p. 12). Putting it differently, I relied on informants' discourses about the particularities of their own lives to trace their grounded-in-practice reasoning and, penetrating into the logic of the socially-oriented processing of phenomena, to build the in-depth understanding of critical issues.

Speaking about epistemology, or a knowledge system underpinning theory, the current study was constructionist in nature. The term social constructionism was originally introduced by Berger and Luckmann (1966) to refer to the assumption that social structures and interactions are defined and produced by bearers of knowledge. The key characteristic of constructionist approaches is a critical attitude to axiomatic statements about the world (Burr, 2003). This epistemological lens calls for re-defining formulas lying on the surface by means of personal insights in order to acquire a deeper, more conscious understanding of phenomena. In the case of the present investigation, I believe that the instances of people's practice acquired meaning only when personalised contributions were continuously being registered, analysed, discussed, shared, and negotiated (Crotty, 2003).

I would like to stress that my quest on the ontological and epistemological levels was deployed in the *relational context* which was defined by Gergen (2003) as “a condition in which we are positioned vis-à-vis others and the world” (p. 149).

Moreover, research participants and I were engaged in the relationships of *relational responsibility*, the activity described by Gergen (2009) as the multi-agent, reciprocal meaning making. My role as researcher did not imply that I was the single holder of the indisputable truth which participants should have conformed to. Contrastingly, I regarded my informants as sovereign and competent partners “in sustaining processes of communications in which meaning is never frozen or terminated, but remains in a continuous state of becoming” (Gergen, 2009, pp. 120-121). Participants’ insights into the status of English in Kuwait and the quality of teacher training were treated as equally important and valuable, while my task was to carefully record heterogeneous opinions and accurately interpret them as situated in the given cultural and social environment.

The interpretivist, constructionist approach chosen for the present investigation involved the attitude which Wellington (2000) has called “a healthy bias” (p. 42) since I did not remain neutral to the issues discussed and settings observed. The general format of my research extended beyond any formal ‘objectivity’ of some positivist scholar who would have sought for controllability, uniformity or homogeneity of data and participants. The main guidelines for me throughout the total research process were *reflectivity* over each element of investigation, or critical analysis and continuous re-conceptualisation of research questions, methods and instruments, as well as *reflexivity*, or positioning of the self amidst the polylogue of participants’ voices and investigative procedures. Following recommendations from Wellington (2000), I tried to introduce *reflectivity* at each stage of my research, while *reflexivity* was used more carefully so that to avoid excessive references to my own beliefs and background details.

Tackling the issues pertaining to the researcher’s role and exchange of messages between me and participants, I could not escape taking into account the mode of subjectivity that speaking and thinking agents brought into intellectual, conversational

and analytical activities. As Pring (2004) has explained, subjective meanings are “different understandings and interpretations which the participants bring with them to the situation” (p. 98). In other words, people tend to apply the system of their personalised coordinates and references to every manifestation of life so that to reflect over the surrounding existential complexity. My research experience has demonstrated that subjectivity may become a two-edged sword when personalised accounts are utilised to analyse interactional processes on the scale of social institutions or communities.

On the one hand, subjective apprehension helps to register the micro-elements of the relevant phenomena in a deeper, scaled-up form. On the other hand, while indulging oneself in subjective conceptualisation, nobody is safe from misinterpreting or corrupting (whether consciously or not) situational instances. Rex (1974) has overtly stated that subjective meaning-making activities should not be put above the collectively constructed ones since the goal of social research is far from tracking individual motives and intentions. The dualism of collective-subjective modes of thinking was present in the current research. My respondents’ subjective interpretations of the critical phenomena – the status of English and the quality of ELT teacher preparation in Kuwait – sometimes went against the collectively agreed upon rules or codes, the centripetal nature of which kept the integrity of social hierarchies.

On this point, Fay (1998) criticised the interpretivist school for the disposition “to learn not what actual agents know but what a fully self-knowledgeable agent would be able to provide if there were such a person” (p. 127). Putting it differently, the researcher has stressed that nobody possesses the fullest and deepest knowledge of the world as constructed in a course of social interactions. The blind belief in the pervasive capability of subjective ideational products to describe various instances of the life-world is intolerable since it fails to highlight “irrational forms of social interaction” and

“fundamental inadequacies or incoherences in a culture’s schemes of meaning” (Fay, 1998, p. 127) which result from those misunderstandings or biases and support them.

The fallacy of understanding and explaining the reality only through one’s isolated mind may be corrected through the following reflexive steps described by Kögler (2007). Acknowledging the introspective nature of the individual cognition which ascribes meaning to phenomena as relating to the self, the scholar has suggested that “quasi-immediate re-living of the other’s thoughts and intentions” should be substituted with “an interpretive reconstruction of the other’s intentional acts in a reflexively appropriated background context” (Kögler, 2007, p. 364). Applying those words to the case of my research, it was not enough for me to attempt seeing the reality through the participants’ eyes. I gathered rich data about the context where the investigation took place and sought to trace similarities and differences between subjective meanings provided by my informants and third-party evidence on the same issues.

I would suggest untangling the deadlock of subjectivism by reminding one more time that it is not the requirement of the interpretive constructionist framework to impose personalised beliefs and concepts onto partners in the meaning-making activity. Sense of things should be carefully worked upon rather than being randomly labelled to just of one’s caprice. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to identify agents’ intentions and make allowance for them while reporting about social phenomena of interest. The intentional implications of social actions cannot be assessed by simply looking at things, and here interpretive constructionist epistemology outperforms the positivist one since the former is more suitable for penetrating beyond the facial layer of actions and statements into the deeper levels of meaning.

This constructionist epistemology allowed me to track the hidden nature of the critical phenomena by studying participants’ narratives as reflecting human cognition,

emotions, motives, learning processes, and socially bounded behavioural patterns.

Tracing participants' discursive references to and explanations of reality, I was able to discover the new meanings of things through language treated as a social variable.

Doing so, I followed Bakhtin (2004) with his theory of social heteroglossia. The Russian scholar has proposed regarding language not as a solid entity but rather as a family of discourses, each revealing "the verbal-ideological evolution of specific social groups" (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 270). From such perspective, human communication becomes a dialogue between the varying discourses that create a promising polyvocal environment, whereby social and linguistic processes convey the multitude of connotations.

Similar ideas have been expressed by Wittgenstein (2001) who views language as "the unique correlate, picture, of the world" (par. 96, p. 38). To the understanding of this German philosopher, people are engaged in the continuous process of using linguistic elementary structures (i.e., sounds, words and sentences) to establish the relationship between the self and the surrounding reality. This activity is referred to as language-games, each being "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which is woven" (Wittgenstein, 2001, par. 7, p. 4). It means that language is not isolated from human activities where it is used not only for the goal of naming or indexing material objects, but also for negotiating meanings which are assigned to the material and non-material instances of the life-world by particular speaking agents. Putting it differently, language practices are complex processes taking place along both linguistic and cultural axes of the social coordinate grid. These ideas highlight the interpretive power of communication as a powerful cognitive tool.

Relying on discourse as an important tool to construct meanings and seek explanations for them in the surrounding social and cultural environment, I was able to trace "the experiential, the embodied, the emotive qualities of human experience that

contribute the narrative quality to a life” (Guba & Lincoln, 2008, p. 272). Moreover, I moved beyond the careful registration of participants’ narrations and tried to excavate the potential of those stories for the further development of the situations and people observed. Utilising such approach, I was guided by Schutz (1967) who is one of the earliest contributors to formulating the interpretive stance who has developed a distinction between anticipation, or expectation of the definite result in the future, and protention, or prognosis of change in any form. Acknowledging that plans and aspirations can be realised only through act, Schutz (1967) has stressed:

[T]he protentions appear as empty and unfulfilled only in the constitutive process of unreflected-upon action, in the gradual unrolling of experiences in spontaneous Activity. But as soon as the intentional glance lights upon the action, [...] the action is contemplated as if it were already over and done with, fully constituted. (p. 58)

In other words, when analysing and interpreting participants’ discourses, I was able not only to create the record of their life-worlds, but also to encourage those agents combating their routines and making changes. Thus reflexivity that is one of the key instruments for interpretation in the current research settings could be unfolded in both directions – into yesterday and tomorrow.

I will summarise the basic theoretical principles of my investigation as follows. The researchers mentioned in this section have stressed that phenomena taking place in real-life contexts acquire meaning only when people start thinking about them and analysing their personal opinions on the given matter. The issue of English language as occupying the communicative, cultural, and ideological space of Arabic in Kuwait’s education system is an element of the general language planning that is treated differently by various parties. Those involved in the ELT process rarely concentrate on the effects and consequences of Anglicisation of the Kuwaiti intellectual and social



environment. I have made an attempt to involve my colleagues into an intricate world of hope and doubt to understand the problems that are being acute for people of my generation and will become even more burning for our children – that is, the status of English in Kuwait’s academic life and the competence of the country's teacher workforce to deliver English to learners in its full vigour without negatively affecting the native tongue.

If the key objective of interpretive constructionist intellectual effort is criticising the status quo and informing the meaningful change, language in its rich array of discourses and conversational practices becomes an efficient medium for and tool of reformation. Hibberd (2005) described language, being treated from the constructionist perspective, as an instrument helping “to contemplate the intellectual issues at stake” (p. 181) in order to modify circumstances for the worse or better depending on speakers’ intentions. Gergen and Gergen (2003) have argued that the goal of any intellectual inquiry is “to move beyond creating, criticizing, and reconstructing our discourses of the real and the good, to generating practices that directly advance our visions” (p. 158). I am fully supportive of the claim, given the context of my own research.

My investigation took place in the challenging environment of Kuwait where social and linguistic heteroglossia is producing complex effects on individual and collective identities. The attitudes towards using the Arabic and English languages are also shaped by a range of socially constructed factors such as stakeholders’ status, location, access to material and intellectual resources. These diverse parameters somehow predict the reactions of individuals and collective agencies to the issues and challenges posed by globalisation, contradictory language policy making in education as well as language ideologies. The interpretive constructivist paradigm with its interest in communication is especially valuable for tracing the flexible, continuously changing world of meanings in natural settings.

To conclude the section, we need to become conscious constructors of our life by means of interpretation and reflection that deal with our preferred futures (Pennycook, 2001a), scenarios that we choose for ourselves concerning English and Arabic language teachings and elements of our professional teacher knowledge in Kuwait. Orienting research participants towards reflection over the status quo and reassessment of various elements of their life-worlds, I took into account Giroux's claim that teachers should become critical in the sense that they "need to do more than identify language and values of corporate ideologies as they are manifested in [...] curricula" and "need to deconstruct the processes through which they are produced and circulated" (Giroux, 1988, p. 103).

## **Research Design**

Formulating the research design for this study, I followed Kincheloe (2002) who argued that the world could not be split into measured parts and called for viewing reality as being developed in terms of complexity as time passed in parallel with maturation of a knower. From this perspective, the investigation was characterized by the following (Guba, 1990): first, logic flowed from specific to general items so that explanations were generated inductively from data. Second, the knower and the known could not be separated because the bearer of subjective knowledge was the only source of information about the life-world. Third, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that doing research in natural settings means "attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

The research was designed employing two data-collection methods. First, a questionnaire was developed and piloted to a group of trainee teachers. This was then followed by a revised version which was administered to trainee teachers from the two sole Kuwaiti teacher preparation institutions – CBE and KU. After careful analysis, a

series of in-depth, qualitative personal interviews were conducted with trainee teachers and a selection of their lecturers.

The quantitative strand as manifested through questionnaires was employed for the following reasons. First, the survey instrument was constructed and administered to get an overall picture of the general tendencies registered by a large number of trainee teachers concerning the critical issues. Second, it assisted in generating the questions for in-depth qualitative interviews by checking for agreement and disagreement of the respondents. Third, a questionnaire introduced the trainee teachers indirectly to the themes of the study prior to gaining their approval for participation in interviews. In other words, they were informed on what to expect in terms of principal ideas when they gave their consent.

In its turn, the interviewing stage of the study was organised following conventions of the interpretive paradigm. It was chosen for both external and internal strength (Dewey, 1968) in uncovering the meaning of not simply physically assessed objects but also of “the selective determinations and relations of objects in thought” (p. 97). The idea fits constructionist epistemology that views phenomena as being cognitively and emotionally re-constructed and reflected upon by thinkers who are involved in the process of conscious interpretation and critical analysis. As an individual becomes experienced in a course of time, the temporal factor adds additional quality to the process of conceptualisation and research, helping to identify a richer array of meanings and strands for discovery.

To be precise, the qualitative interviewing stage fitted the paradigm of personalistic-phenomenological inquiry that was defined by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) as “a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value” (p. 22). In my study the stress was made on “the individual and questions of being and becoming” and the research traced “the

transformation of individual perception and consciousness” (Giarelli & Chambliss, 2001, p. 38). The objective of the present research as the phenomenological one tackled eliciting meanings that social agents attached to the environment inhabited by them. From that perspective, the interviewing was characterised in the following way. First, subjective, or individual, consciousness was of primary importance. Second, consciousness as an active transformational and meaning-making force applied to changing the given environment. Third, modes of change were realised by me as a researcher and by participants through careful reflection.

I chose the sequential mixed methods design “to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method” (Creswell, 2009, p. 14). In other words, I hoped that positive features of the two different paradigms would contribute to the effect of creative synergy, while drawbacks of each would be neutralised. For example, surveys are acknowledged to be “the most practical and usable” (Brown, 2001, p. 15) in tracking conceptualisations of those representing any professional organisation without utilising complex statistics to analyse the results. The choice of questionnaires at the initial phases of my investigation helped me to better organise a large array of data and define directions for further in-depth qualitative investigations. In its turn, the interviewing process, which is the active exchange of information between the two people resulting in “a contextually bound and mutually created story” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696), related the quantitative data to participants’ specific contexts and social practices.

By employing two methods, I also hoped to create a “complex, holistic picture” (Creswell, 2007, p. 249). My goal was to produce and describe a bricolage, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) put it or “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 4). In other words, I attempted to grasp the complexity of Kuwaiti educational context by penetrating into the daily life of future

English language teachers and their instructors who were able to report the key functions of English as an international phenomenon and the associated characteristics of the country-specific teacher training programmes. It was the natural everyday environment of the two key educational establishments as bounded by the complex web of collectively imposed and individually invented rules and codes that constituted a research field for investigating the critical problems.

### **Research Participants**

Pring (2004) has stressed that the main activity of those busy with interpretive, socially constructed inquiry is to “attach meaning to themselves and others” (p. 98) so that subjective implications of agents would create the new narrative about the surroundings. To achieve my research objectives associated with people’s concepts concerning problematic issues, I enrolled representatives of the two categories of stakeholders who were actively involved into the processes pertaining to ELT and teacher preparation in Kuwait. There were two sub-groups identified:

1. English language trainee teachers from CBE and KU;
2. English language lecturers from CBE and KU.

From the ideological point, the present study could be called developmental since it implied “close contact between the researcher and the research participants” and a package of data collection methods “which are interactive [...] and allow for emergent issues to be explored” (Snape & Spencer, 2009, p. 5). Putting it differently, participants were encouraged to describe the specific phenomena in parallel with changing their attitudes or perceptions in a course of time. Also, from the perspective of sampling, it was a cohort research since it tracked the trends within two groups of people who shared an array of similar traits: age, educational background, and profession. The sample of trainee teachers consisted of young female individuals who were enrolled in ELT training programmes at CBE and KU. The sample of instructors consisted of

professional lecturers who worked in the same two educational establishments. All participants of the study were of Kuwaiti background. Each member of the two training programmes had a chance to participate.

The total number of contributors to the investigation was 255 (181 individuals from CBE and 74 – from KU). Among them, six people were lecturers (4 from CBE and 2 – from KU) who contributed to the third interviewing phase of my investigation. Overall, 28 CBE trainee teachers participated in the questionnaire piloting phase, and 196 trainee teachers (132 from CBE and 64 – from KU) completed the questionnaire in the second phase. From the number of those trainee teachers who completed questionnaires, 25 (17 from CBE and 8 – from KU) took part in qualitative interviewing sessions. The trainee teachers sample stood for 48% of the total population at the two establishments of CBE and KU ( $N_{\text{CBE}} = 336$ ;  $N_{\text{KU}} = 133$ ;  $N_{\text{total}} = 469$ ). First-year trainee teachers were excluded from the pool because they were busy taking remedial courses and have still not been fully engaged in any of the department's activities.

I formed my multi-group sample so that to identify those possessing “some specific knowledge about the topic being investigated” (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2006, p. 140) or having extended information on the critical issues. Intending “to provide a fair picture of the diversity” (Mertens, 2009, p. 317), I located sites where the phenomena of interest (English language and teacher preparation) were manifested in their full vigour, i.e., at the two major and only tertiary education establishments. This strategy of *intensity sampling* that implied looking for a wide array of cases without trying to find anything outstanding or unusual was paired with the *maximum-variation* one (Patton, 2002), whereby I identified research environments varying from each other in terms of location, the philosophy of learning, and academic curricula. During sampling I took into consideration the local mentality. My home state is a small country where personal relations and social networking make the solid foundation for the life of

community. I did not face problems with contacting any of the pool members since all I had to do was to approach members of my closest professional environment. Due to the ability to directly contact programme supervisors who allowed me access to trainee teachers, I did not have to send any formal introductory letters via mail, although I devised a form of this kind to add strength to my research design and eventually handed it out prior to administering the questionnaire (Appendix A).

At the interviewing stage, I obtained written permission from all members of the sample (Appendix B). The final number of individuals entering, trainee teacher and lecturer cohorts, at the appropriate research stages offered an adequately sized sample to illustrate the range of concepts/attitudes in regard to language planning and teacher preparation in Kuwait from the perspective of two stakeholder groups. The pool was formed carefully enough to provide a credible synthesis of the perceptions in regards to problematic issues as observed among participants of Kuwait's education system. Those taking part in the study were informed that they could obtain copies of my doctoral project upon its successful completion.

### **Data Collection Tools and Justification**

In my study I utilised questionnaires (spread among only trainee teachers) and individual interviews (conducted with both trainee teachers and their lecturers). The details concerning the choice of instruments are provided below.

#### **Questionnaires**

A data collection tool of a questionnaire is praised by researchers (e.g., Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003; Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2008) for several reasons, among which are the possibilities to clarify both conceptual and structural framework of investigation and to facilitate analysis of the information retrieved. The choice of the questionnaire to be used at the first and second stages of the study was guided by the research questions listed in the appropriate section of the present chapter.

During the piloting stage, questions focusing on respondents' perceptions of the English language and the implications of current views of English on their teacher preparation were formulated on the basis of relevant literature that was processed for the goals of better itemisation and categorisation. In other words, a funnelling approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) was utilised to move from more general themes to the narrower ones within the framework designated. The technique helped to clarify trainee teachers' personal perceptions of broad concepts and constructs pertaining to English functioning outside Anglophone countries and the quality of Kuwait's teacher training programmes.

The initial version of the questionnaire given to the piloting group ( $n = 28$ ) consisted of two sections. The first part contained 18 items and explored trainee teachers' personal backgrounds concerning English language learning experience and relationship between Arabic and English in various spheres of life. The second part of 25 questions interrogated participants about their ideas pertaining to the status of English and their professional training. The questionnaire also included a short preface introducing the aim of inquiry and the concluding section where I asked participants to provide their comments and thanked them for efforts. Besides, there was a special field for trainee teachers to write down their contact details, were they interested in joining the interview stage of my research.

In regards to the content of the questionnaire, the first draft of that 5-point Likert-scale instrument included 43 items, of which 25 required a person to select among the variants 'strongly agree' - 'agree' - 'not sure' - 'disagree' - 'strongly disagree'; 14 – from the set of 'always' – 'sometimes' – 'usually' – 'rarely' – 'never'; 2 – from the checkboxes of 'English' – 'Arabic' – 'both' – 'other'; and each of the remaining 2 questions suggested respondents choosing between the three miscellaneous



alternatives relating to the type of school they attended and the age when they started learning English.

Upon piloting, the survey instrument was modified in the following way. First, the number of questions in the first section titled *About Yourself* was reduced from 18 to 11 items, and in the second part – from 25 to 23 items. Those questions were removed because they distracted attention from the main research objectives. For example, the item “Do you read popular literature in Arabic?” made trainee teachers think about their reading habits, while I meant to put a stress on the language used for various goals. Second, re-formulation of some interrogative sentences was performed on the basis of feedback from trainee teachers who misunderstood particular questions because of the wording (e.g., ‘siblings,’ ‘Anglophone,’ ‘popular literature,’ ‘domestic helpers’). Third, the uniform scale for answers was introduced (see a description of the final questionnaire version below).

The clean copy of the questionnaire (see Appendix C) was developed to suit five key features of an adequate data collection instrument of such kind (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003; Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2007). First, the clear purpose of eliciting respondents’ opinions concerning the status of English in Kuwait and the quality of local teacher preparation programmes was stated. Second, relevant constructs and concepts were introduced to fulfil primary objectives. To those belonged the three-circle model of English expansion, the relationship between language and culture, language varieties, language planning and policy making, teacher knowledge base, and so on. Third, I attempted to include in the questionnaire as many critical issues as possible without losing the main foci of interrogation. Fourth, various types of questions were used to encourage the free flow of thought on the part of participants. Finally, the tool allowed for identifying strands for further in-depth, qualitative analysis as based on the retrieved empirical information.

As mentioned above, the initial pool of about 43 questions was reduced to 34 items that were categorised in two sections. Of those, 11 questions were included for the participants to share information concerning their ELT background and socio-linguistic preferences. According to the classification developed by Patton (2002), the items included in the first section of the survey were *demographic/background* and *behavioural/experience* questions. The former aimed at describing life details of respondents, and the latter clarified how they acted as situated within the specific circumstances (i.e., when talking to relatives or domestic helpers). The remaining 23 items, which explored trainee teachers' understanding of the English language phenomenon and invited them to talk about their teacher participation, could be defined as *opinion/value* and *feelings* questions (Patton's taxonomy). If to utilise Rossett's approach (as described in Brown, 2001, pp. 32-34), the second section of the survey included *priorities* questions aimed at ranging of phenomena and activities (e.g., item 22, 'Nowadays, it is more important to learn English than Standard Arabic') and *attitudes* questions (e.g., item 24, 'Teaching children American/British culture will make the English language easier for them to understand'). Assessment of the latter kind was performed by future English language teachers in regards to the presence of the most acute themes (i.e., multi-dimensionality of English, language varieties, language culture, language planning, and etc.) in the curriculum of CBE and KU English departments.

From the point of organisation, the questionnaire belonged to the family of structured ones with a limited set of items. Questions from the first part were closed-ended, special ones requiring respondents to provide accurate information concerning their English language learning practices. A five-point rating scale was designed to compare the contributions of English and Arabic to trainee teachers' lives (only Arabic; only English; both English and Arabic equally; both [languages] but more Arabic; both

[languages] but more English). The questions of the second section were formulated as statements. The five-item scale (strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; strongly disagree) was designed for possible answers. I also saved the structural components introducing the theme of the study, asking for trainee teachers' contact information, and thanking them for participation. Both pilot and clean-copy questionnaires were in English.

### **Interviews**

The general aim of interviews as based on the data from questionnaires was to elicit not "the absolute meaning" of phenomena but the "meaning for a certain individual or a group" (Kincheloe, 2002, p. 234). Kvale (2007) called the interview "a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world" (p. 11). I took into account interactive relationships between the social life-world and research participants who inhabit it in order to obtain teachers' perceptions in regards to the English language policy and the relevant teacher training in Kuwait.

To pursue the goal, I switched between close- and open-ended questions (Dörnyei, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005) depending on the flow of conversation. The close-ended ones were used to straightforwardly retrieve the interviewees' opinions about specific problematic issues when I provided alternatives for the informant to choose from. The open-ended ones aimed at identifying and explaining non-linear relationships between the concepts tackled upon without imposing any pre-defined categorisation that might have restricted the scope of inquiry.

I invited the participants of the study to share their personal visions of the phenomena using the following probes; "how important is the English language for Kuwaitis?" and "when I say the term 'global' or 'international' English, what comes to your mind?" The subsequent narrowing questions were; "why do you think English is

important?” and “do you think there’s a difference between English as a foreign language and English as a second language?” (See Appendix D)

The broad wording of these questions let me establish “a conceptual template with which to compare and contrast results, not seen as establishing a priori categories for data collection and analysis” (Mertens, 2010, p. 115). Since there was little research in regards to the issues of English and Arabic language planning and teacher preparation in Kuwait, respondents’ answers to the initial open-ended questions provided “contextual, holistic, thematic descriptions of particular experiences” (de Marrais, 2004, p. 56). In the beginning of each session, the “why” interrogative forms were avoided in order not to lose an emphasis on specific descriptions of personal attitudes. The aim was to avoid any cause-effect analysis or rationalisation of individual experiences that became revealed on the subsequent phases of conversations.

After a set of open-ended questions, semi-structured questions followed “to enable the contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 182). By using those semi-structured probes, I obtained more opportunities to control the process by means of more determined structures, while respondents were free enough to manage the flow of data on their part (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003). Within the semi-structured section of interviews I encouraged my interviewees to provide details on the issues that were raised in the open-ended section. Responses clarified and categorised the elements of English language teaching/learning, of Kuwait-specific language planning and policy making, and of teacher knowledge base.

In general, my conversations with trainee teachers and lecturers could be called in-depth interviews because they helped to “establish a contextual basis for understanding” (Darling, 2002, p. 143), and that conceptual grid was applied to identify the participants’ perceptions of language teaching and planning in Kuwait. I abstained

from employing any formal filter during the talk in order to allow for more active interpretation that was wrapped around “empathy, intuition, intelligence, and experience” (Stake, 2010, p. 206), thus establishing a common ground for negotiating personal meanings. Acting in such a manner, I demonstrated what Kvale (2007) called “qualified naïveté” (p. 12) or sensitiveness towards any unexpected ideas that emerged in the flow of conversations. To allow for that, I organised all discussions in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere and, while stepping into discussion of some critical issues with my respondents I tried not to make them feel uncomfortable. The general interviewing framework will be discussed below.

### **Procedures of Data Collection**

The research proceeded in three phases. At phase 1, I designed a trainee teacher questionnaire form and piloted it to improve both the structure and content of the tool. To test the survey instrument, I went on a data collection field trip to CBE. There I obtained permission to pass out questionnaires for a class of 28 trainee teachers. Upon gaining feedback from respondents, changes to the initial draft were made accordingly, whereas difficult terms and confusing questions were removed, the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the questionnaire was shortened, and a more consistent scale was designed.

At phase 2, the re-organised questionnaire was delivered to students in a rather straightforward manner. First of all, I approached the heads of appropriate departments at CBE and KU who granted their permission for conducting research at their locations. It was easy to contact the lecturers since most of them were my colleagues who became very supportive either by agreeing to be interviewed or allowing me full access to their mentees. To specify, at the second stage, I visited classrooms at CBE and KU to be introduced to students. When all potential candidates became informed about the factors that led me to contacting them as well as about the nature of the study and research procedures, the participants were told that their contribution would be completely

voluntary and they would have an opportunity to withdraw at any time. Some individuals preferred to refrain and decided to leave the auditoriums.

At phase 3, the recruitment of respondents for in-depth interviews took place. I asked the lecturers from CBE and KU to join my research as informants. Six colleagues of mine gave consent when contacted in their offices. The students chosen for the interviews were the ones that were eager to participate after the completion of the questionnaire by putting their names and contact details on the questionnaire sheets. No other criteria for inclusion were utilised. All of respondents were approached via SMS-messages to agree on an interview schedule. Interviewing of lecturers and students from CBE took place in a small office provided by the department, and the interviews with respondents from KU proceeded in empty classrooms on campus. The workflow at all stages was completed over approximately a three-month period.

### **Procedures of Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed in the three following steps:

#### **Pilot Stage**

The data that was obtained from CBE students at the pilot stage was entered into SPSS v. 17 programme. Cronbach's Alpha-value for items 3-16 amounted to 0.607 demonstrating a relatively low level of reliability, while results for items 19-43 were acceptable ( $\alpha = 0.749$ ). Frequency and percentages for each question were calculated. Other analysis operations included descriptive statistics and Spearman Rho-correlations to identify the existence of any relationship between the items.

#### **Questionnaires**

The data retrieved from questionnaires were converted to the numerical form and analysed using SPSS v.17 software. Calculations made were analogous to those performed on the previous stage. Cronbach's Alpha-value for items 1-11 amounted to 0.720 demonstrating acceptable reliability, similarly results for items 12-34 yielded

higher results in comparison to the pilot stage ( $\alpha = 0.787$ ). Frequency tables were compiled for each question to facilitate the qualitative analysis that was performed to get a better understanding of trends and issues tackled.

### **Interviews**

The verbatim conversation content from personal interviews was captured by digital voice-recorder and later transcribed. Since interviewees often code-switched between Arabic and English and also two interviews were conducted exclusively in Arabic language, the protocols were edited (translated into English, where necessary). The subsequent analysis of raw qualitative data was conducted with the NVivo v.8 software which was effective for tracing the general conceptual patterns (Rogers, 2004). However, I had to return at some points to the paper-and-pencil method in order not to miss the complexity of the boundary crossings with the data I collected.

The analysis of qualitative data proceeded in 4 steps:

#### ***Step 1: Data management.***

Step one was the participants' description of their experiences in regards to the status of the English language, links between language and culture, relationships between English and Arabic in the local educational and social context, as well as professional teacher preparation. The verbatim conversation content was registered by audio-recording and later analysed and transcribed. These transcriptions were "infinitely more reliable than any notes, quotes, remarks and summaries [the researcher] might jot down during an interview" (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 47). Standard recording and transcription equipment was used to document the interview data.

#### ***Step 2: Reading/memoing.***

Step two occurred when I reflected on the ideas, perceptions and concepts presented in the data. Kvale (2007) has suggested scanning "the complete interview [...]" to get a sense of the whole" (p. 107). I filtered each discourse experience to identify the

specific patterns of ideational activity as pertaining to participants' personal and professional backgrounds as well as the conversational context. I also took into account how each informant perceived their position as situated within the hierarchy of the teacher training programme to measure the degree of dependency on the institutional ideologies. During some interviewing sessions there were many episodes when informants expressed their feelings or attitudes with the help of non-verbal cues such as laughter, giggle or shrug. Those reactions were registered in the protocols and were treated as additional data to support or refute the ideas expressed verbally. After reconstructing the details of every single interpersonal experience with each of my respondents in such a manner the content analysis procedure became more productive.

***Step 3: Describing, classifying, and interpreting.***

Step three took place when I synthesised and interpreted what the interviewees had described. At this stage, a formation of categories occurred that was “the heart of qualitative data analysis” (Creswell, 2007, p. 151).

**Describing:** At this sub-stage, I summarised my personal experience of the phenomenon to bracket it out in the future for better listening to the interviewees' voices. I was also attentive to finding multiple forms of evidence to support each of a few initial categories and to grasp multiple perspectives of the participants about each category. The details of interviewees' perceptions were “provided in situ, that is, within the context of the setting of the person, place, or event” (Creswell, 2007, p. 151).

Description was merged with classification.

**Classifying:** At this sub stage, I compiled a list of the respondents' meaningful utterances which they had used in order to describe their individual experiences. Each of these statements was treated as equally worthy, although I excluded repetitive and overlapping ones from the analysis framework. Then I clustered those utterances by



concepts and tried to compare them against each other in order to avoid “a single, monolithic approach” (Patton, 2002, p. 76) to the data previously gathered.

Upon the iterative analysis with the help of NVivo 8.0 software and continuous memoing of the rich data gathered, two major topics were identified; the status of English and professional ELT training from the GE perspective. Under those two topics, themes were grouped to establish answers to the research questions stated earlier in the study. The details of the themes will be provided in chapter 6.

Interpreting: The interviewees’ experiences were portrayed as verbatim descriptions and then interpretation started from elaboration of textural descriptions and proceeded onto the stage of structural descriptions where I tried to find the “potential for interweaving of viewpoints, for the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and for borrowing, or bricolage, where borrowing seems useful [and] richness enhancing” (Guba & Lincoln, 2008, p. 259). My task then became more complex as I had to trace the development of particular issues across voluminous discursive protocols and relate those concepts to the third-party research to synthesise the data about problematic points. Multi-level interpretation was performed in iterative, consecutive rounds in order to address all the complex issues identified in their mutual interrelatedness. An example of NVivo coding as complemented by my personal memos can be found in Appendix E.

#### ***Step 4: Representing/visualising.***

To remind, information retrieved from the two samples of Kuwaiti ELT trainee teachers and their lecturers was obtained through questionnaires and in-depth, qualitative interviews. My intention was to make the summative process “not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project” but rather “a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis” (Richardson, 2003, p. 499). Within the current research framework, the narration about the research procedures and outcomes acquired the form of a story, in which the most illustrative participants’ perceptions were

described and cited. The excerpts from interviews were commented using relevant literature. I tried to balance as carefully as possible respondents' narrations and my personal descriptions and interpretation to construct the integrative picture of English in Kuwait.

When performing the task, I had to handle a large set of qualitative data using the specific data management procedure. Data were managed via two portfolios for the two participant groups. Each portfolio was coded in accordance with participation status: trainee teachers (TT) and lecturers (L). Each portfolio comprised three types of files, each having the specific function: 1) personal notes, 2) interview transcripts, and 3) analytical briefcases. Additionally, the trainee teachers' portfolio included the questionnaire completed at the survey stage. Personal notes tackled mainly the details of face-to-face interviews with trainee teachers and lecturers. I commented on the interviewees' flow of reasoning and the style of conversations. The transcript files included handwritten records of the interviews, and audio-recordings. The latter were transcribed, edited and corrected and each audio-recording was labelled by a participant code number. Student teachers were coded using numbers 1-25, and lecturers were assigned to numbers 1-6. Analytical files comprised concepts and themes that emerged in the process of interviewing as well as registered possible intertopical links between the surveys and interviews. Each participant of the interviewing phase was coded in the portfolio and the three files. The participants were coded according to role and file number (e.g., lecturer=L, personal file =1, code is L1). An index card file was created to facilitate the use of portfolios. The coding scheme was used to identify the participants by the type of educational establishments they belonged to and time of meeting. After tracking the main themes that emerged with those initially proposed, a new portfolio was created with a new coding system dealing with the sub-themes under each of the two main topics. This portfolio contained files which were cross referenced. This

system of data management helped me to retrieve the data required comfortably and safely.

### **Marrying the Data: Analysing Collectively**

At first glance, it might seem appropriate to examine the quantitative and qualitative materials separately to differentiate between various sub-samples. However, upon careful consideration I came to the following conclusion in regards to the presentation of the data. In my case, the numerically assessed trainee teachers' answers to questionnaires were valuable as supporting the qualitatively processed interview discourses so that general tendencies and conceptual frames could be tracked. Lecturers' interview responses provided additional depth to the data corpus concerning the quality of teacher programmes and the properties of trainee teacher graduates. Hence instead of splitting the analysis process into several parts (quantitative vs. qualitative stages, students vs. lecturers sub-samples) I decided to unite them together to be thematised and better organised thereupon. In other words, the information was grouped according to themes to fit the whole approach of the research being naturalistic and voice-dependent. Both the lecturers' (where applicable) and trainee teachers' views were included to each topical category.

I treated interview protocols that were rich and dynamic in content as being closely knitted to the questionnaires. The principle was reflected in the very construction of tables for my own reference that included links to both quantitative and qualitative contributions. By doing so I kept in mind the following fact. Some of my participants confessed that they discussed the questions and the answers given upon completion of the questionnaire form and prior to participating in the interview session. Such intensive ideational processes of recollection, reflection, critical re-assessment and the search for insights, which took place during the transitional period between the two research phases, signified a real breakthrough in participants' minds. Knowledge of

those reactions made me aware of the link between structured questionnaires and open-ended interviews. By processing the two types of data as an integrative whole I was able to identify themes and the related concepts from questionnaire responses so that those already discovered issues could be refined and enriched even further during in-depth conversations.

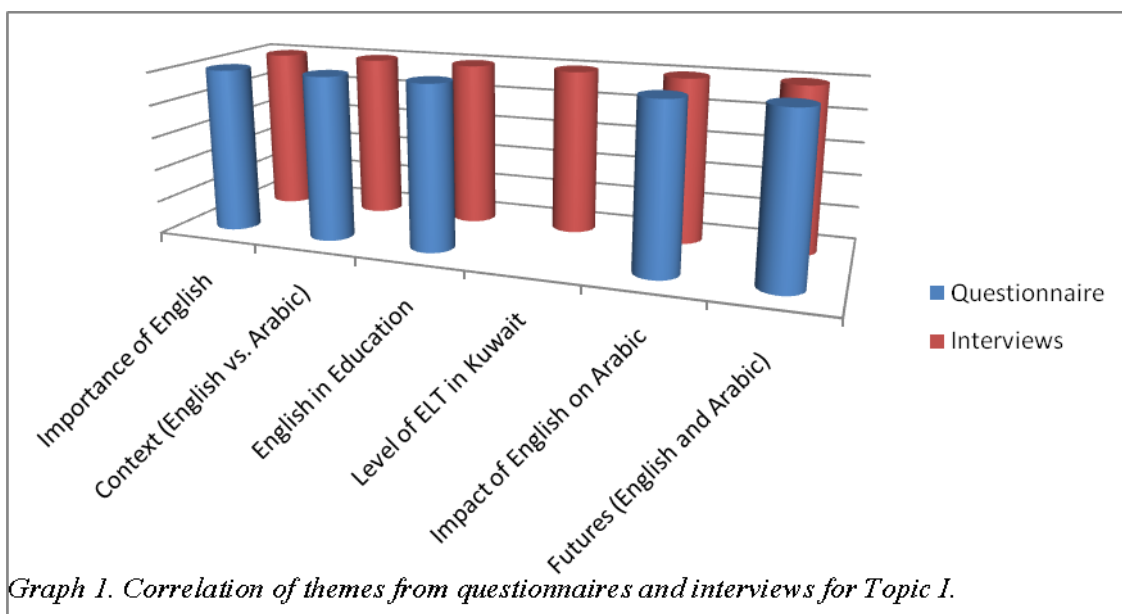
The following sections will describe the logic of internal correlations that were made between interviews and questionnaires, the meanings implied in Rho-correlations, and the links between topics in interview data.

### **Interviews vs. Questionnaires**

As mentioned before, many items from interviews were paired with the ones that emerged out of questionnaires. The latter provided the conceptual basis that was expanded in a course of face-to-face interviewing sessions. The details of the theme formation as backed up by survey items could be easily traced upon analysing conversation protocols and comparing them to the questionnaire form.

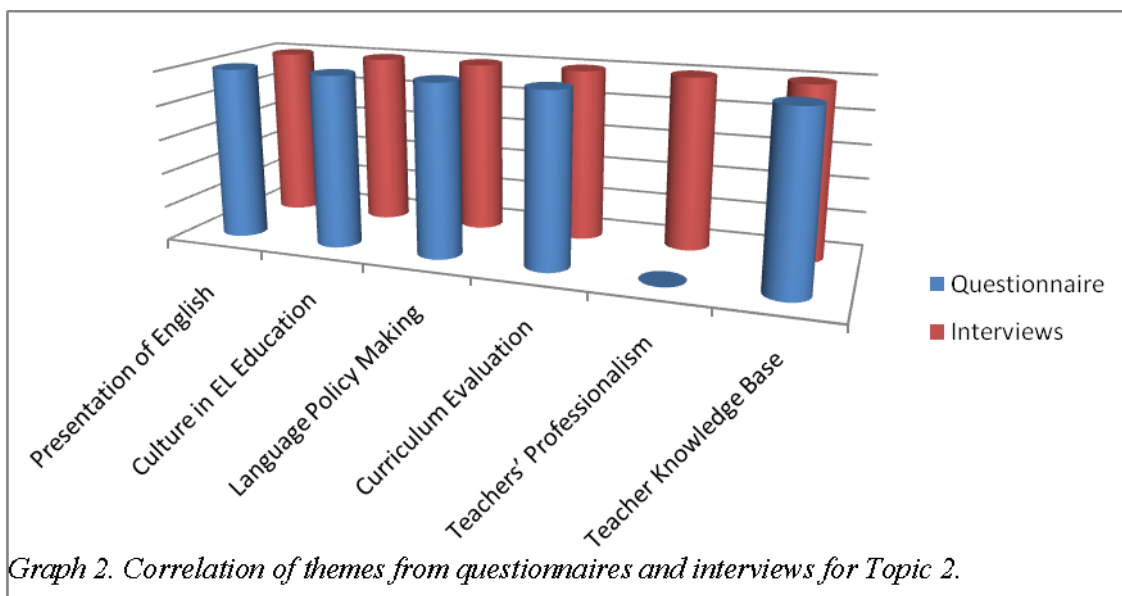
For example, items 13-16 and 28 of the questionnaire (see questionnaire) oriented respondents' minds towards assessing multiple functions of English as appropriated by Kuwaitis (theme 1, Topic 1) including the ideas of language proliferation as related to power, technology, communication, job placement and education. Moreover, approaching the complex problem of English being prolific in Kuwait, interviewees managed to tackle even deeper layers of meaning relating to power and identity as signifiers of language status (theme 5, Topic 1). They were identified partly due to the appropriate questionnaire items.

Graph 1 displays the correlation of themes from the questionnaire and the interviews which helped to excavate the themes for Topic 1 "The status of English." The theme "level of ELT in Kuwait" emerged in the flow of in-depth, interview discussions.



*Figure 1. Correlation of themes from questionnaires and interviews for Topic 1.*

In regards to Topic 2, almost all, except one of the interview themes relating to the quality of ELT training could be traced back to the questionnaire (see Graph 2).



*Figure 2. Correlation of themes from questionnaires and interviews for Topic 2.*

The fact that certain items of personal conversations were not accompanied by survey questions was explained by the research design. Those questions were commented mostly by lecturers who were asked to share their opinions concerning the level of local programmes, and those lecturers did not participate in the survey. The approach introduced a fresh look onto the burning issues. Grouped under the theme

“teachers’ professionalism” were issues that dealt with the challenges that might be faced by trainee teacher graduates at delivering English in real classroom settings, and the characteristics that make a successful teacher preparation programme.

### **Rho-correlations**

Spearman Rho-correlations for validity that were calculated for responses to the questionnaire helped to establish internal relationships within the bulk of the quantitative data. For example, a high correlation (over .500) was found between the following items:

English is the global/international language (item 12).

English is popular all over the world because it is the language of technology (item 14).

Kuwaitis’ knowledge of standard Arabic (*Fus ’ha*) is decreasing because English is getting popular (item 26).

English is the language of technology and business while Arabic is the language of religion and traditions (item 27).

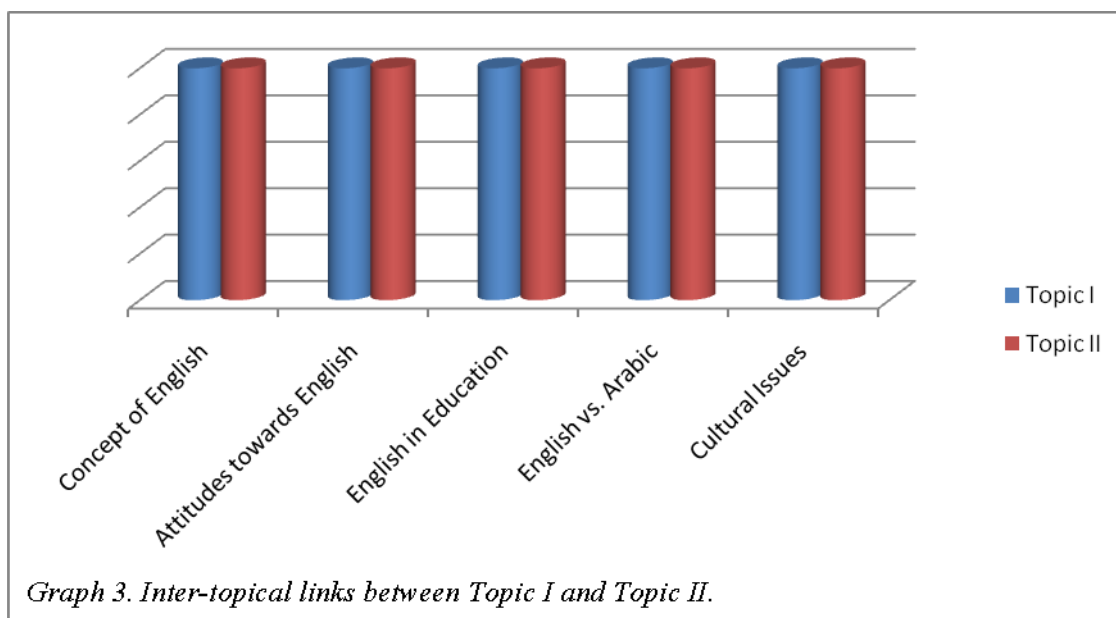
Students being prepared to teach English should study *all* their courses at the college in English (item 32).

The established relationships between those survey elements were traced later when I analysed information from interviews. The issues pertaining to GE which were tackled in questionnaire item 12 and 14 were found later in “Importance of the English language for Kuwaitis” (theme 1, Topic 1). Various functions of English versus Arabic mentioned in survey items 26 and 27 were furthermore analysed in “Impact of English on Arabic” (theme 5, Topic 1), and the phenomenon of “English as a medium of instruction” was reflected over in questionnaire item 32, in “English in the educational context” (theme 3, Topic 1) and in “Presentation of English in the Curriculum” (theme 1, Topic 2).

The abovementioned list of analogies revealed that the certain ideational links existed between quantitative and qualitative data, and in the latter array - across the two themes. The logic of conversation with respondents during interviews showed that the issue of English being popular among Kuwaitis led participants to discussing the concept of World Englishes altogether with the impact of English on the mother tongue and the choice of either English or Arabic as the language of instruction in educational establishments.

### **Intertopical Links in Interview Data**

Speaking about possible inter-topical links (the ones between Topic 1 and Topic 2), Graph 3 demonstrates that both contained identical sub-elements.



*Figure 3. Inter-topical links between Topic I and Topic II.*

Although the above-cited items were replicated, they were assessed from different angles of view and, therefore, placed separately. To illustrate the point, the phenomenon of English was analysed under Topic 1 in order to identify an array of its functions and characteristics such as contexts of usage, implications of power as well as identity formation (see Tables 1 & 2 for details). The same issue as observed in discussion of professional ELT training or Topic 2 was assessed as part of curricular –

English language varieties, the difference between English as a foreign and second language, and English as a medium of instruction at tertiary education establishments. Interviewees evaluated how those concepts were presented in the programme to relate the general problem of English existing in Kuwait to their personal environments. The same consideration was applicable to other issues mentioned in the graph.

This approach allowed me to create the multi-voice framework depicting the state of affairs concerning the status of English and the quality of ELT training as observed at CBE and KU.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness and Credibility**

The complex nature of my investigation made me reflect over the issues of validity and reliability as varying for the quantitative and qualitative parts of my mixed-method study. I would highlight here that the questionnaire was designed to identify the general tendencies pertaining to ELT in Kuwait and provide the basis for formulating questions for in-depth interviews. Following Dörnyei (2008), who warned researchers against overgeneralization of findings to the non-relevant settings or subjects, I would suggest treating the outcomes of my surveying exercise as context-specific.

I ensured that my survey instrument was internally consistent through SPSS calculation of Cronbach Alpha coefficients in compliance with the *internal-consistency method* (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2008). The values were relatively low in regards to the survey piloted among 28 CBE trainee teachers – 0.607 for items 3-16, and 0.749 for items 19-43. Reduction and re-wording of survey items in the second research stage increased Cronbach Alpha values up to 0.720 for items 1-11, and 0.787 for items 12-34. Furthermore, the validity of the questionnaire was ensured using the *face-validity*, *content-validity*, *construct-validity* and *decision-validity* strategies as defined by Brown (2001).



*Face validity* was understood as the extent to which the questionnaire employed seemed valid to individuals without special training in the art of survey design and assessment. In my case, the strategy was employed during the piloting stage when I asked 28 CBE trainee teachers to answer the questions and share their opinions about the items in terms of content and form. Respondents' recommendations were taken into account when I re-designed the survey instrument to be used in the subsequent stage among CBE and KU trainee teachers.

The *content validity* of the questionnaire was ensured using the *descriptive* approach. I created my items relying on the rich collection of third-party research pertaining to the status of English and the quality of teacher training in non-Anglophone contexts. The recent trends in applied linguistics and educational theory were employed to devise the valid survey form that covered themes such as English as an international/global language and medium of instruction, the relationship between language and culture, effects of English on learners' source languages and cultures, language policy making, and construction of teacher knowledge base. Those issues are discussed in depth in the literature review section (chapter 3).

*Construct validity* was treated as the extent to which the survey instrument could assess participants' conceptualisations of the given items. I used factor analysis to track the convergent validity, i.e., high correlation between questions exploring the same construct, and divergent validity, i.e., low correlation between questions exploring different constructs. Using SPSS (v. 17), I calculated Spearman's Rho-correlations for items in each section of the clean-copy questionnaire (revised upon piloting) to assess their validity.

Finally, I took into account the *decision validity* that was defined by Brown (2001) as "the degree to which a survey instrument is being used to make decisions in the intended manner" (p. 190). I addressed the value implications of the questionnaire

by analysing the political and social implications of its distribution and processing. Since participants formed a rather homogeneous pool in terms of social and professional backgrounds, I assumed that they would treat the addressed topics and assigned values in a uniform manner. The extent of understanding was furthermore validated in a course of in-depth interviews. I also analysed possible social consequences of spreading the survey form among CBE and KU trainee teachers. The instrument produced no unwanted effects on trainee teachers' membership in the given training programmes.

Assessing generalisability (external validity) of interviews, I was aware of the fact that most proponents of the interpretive approach would prefer to use the term 'transferability' instead of 'generalisability' because the latter was associated with the scientific positivist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In my understanding of the phenomenon, I followed Lewis and Ritchie (2009) who differentiated between *theoretical* generalisation, *inferential* generalisation, and *representational* generalisation. Concentrating on the first kind of generalisability/transferability, I argue that the qualitative part of my research was theoretically transferable for the following reasons. The applicable theories were traced in participants' conceptualisations and explanations pertaining to the English language and the implications of current views of English on their teacher preparation. As the third-party research indicated, the analogues of the viewpoints and ideas shared by individuals from my research sample can be found in other professional collectives existing in the neighbouring Middle-Eastern or Asian countries. Theoretical perspectives concerning EIL in non-Anglophone contexts and development of teacher education can be furthermore refined and clarified using the data from my research. In order to facilitate transfer of findings onto other settings, I provided *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) or specifications of the research environments. I invite other researchers to either support or refute my results in the congruent non-Anglophone, Arab-medium contexts relying on my detailed notes. The

objective of such activities would be discussion of participants' reactions to the critical issues as formed by their life worlds.

The issues of 'validity' and 'reliability' (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) or 'authenticity' and 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln & Guba, 2006) in regards to interviews, were addressed from the interpretive, constructivist perspective. Emphasising the importance of the participant's emic or internal knowledge as negotiated in a dialogue with the researcher who possesses etic or external knowledge, I appreciated communication between me as the interpretively motivated researcher and participants as conveying the shared understanding of the phenomena and contexts under discussion.

Throughout gathering and processing qualitative data both manually and in NVivo (v. 8.0), I made an emphasis on *dialogical intersubjectivity* or *communicative validity* (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) which implied negotiation of meanings between the researcher and participants in a flow of conversations. Conducting interviews and reflecting over the outcomes, I kept identifying my personal biases and prejudices as possibly affecting the treatment of participants and their discourses so that to meet the requirement for *reflexive objectivity* (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Several techniques were used to ensure the truthfulness, consistency and objectivity during the qualitative phase of my study.

Credibility of my findings as created on the basis of interviews was established through the following. Since I served as an English language instructor at one of the represented teacher training institutions, I was able to demonstrate my *prolonged engagement* (Lincoln & Guba, 2006) in the processes of English language learning and teacher training in Kuwait. Furthermore, *persistent observation* of how programme members acquired knowledge pertaining to the English language acquisition and teacher development added depth to my understanding of the research context so that to refine

the treatment of information and construction of conclusions. Several methods (surveying and interviewing) and data sources (questionnaires, personal interviews, third-party research) were employed to ensure *triangulation* as accompanying credibility and confirmability of my study. Finally, I conducted *member checks* inviting several trainee teachers and lecturers to validate the themes identified. The activity demonstrated authenticity of my categories and conceptual clusters as being faithful to the tackled phenomena and participants' realities.

While undertaking my project I was aware of the possible weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative designs that were intermingled in the case of the present study. While quantitative models might impose too rigid frames to register and categorise the diversity of information, qualitative research might lack generalisability and allow for personal biases (Brown, 2001). The abovementioned weaknesses of each paradigm turned into strengths, however, within the interpretive (naturalistic) philosophical paradigm of educational research as applied to the current mixed-method investigation. Reacting to the interpretive stance, I did not aim at achieving "ultimate truthfulness" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 245) when processing and discussing the retrieved data but sought instead for the variety of connotations and explanations as provided by participants in order to resist fossilised ideologies and dominant theories. The choice of the mixed-method design also improved the internal validity of the research. It allowed me to mediate limitations of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms by providing "a potentially more comprehensive means of legitimizing findings" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 62) as based on numerical and textual data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Treating my ethic and moral obligations as "the oughtness of human existence" that implied "moral demands to act, think, feel, and be in required ways" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 62). Throughout the whole investigation I followed the key ethical

principles delineated by Dörnyei (2008) which were applicable on both the quantitative and qualitative stages of my research. In fulfilment of my ethical obligations, I completed the university Ethics form and submitted it to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the beginning of the study. The copy of the form is provided in (Appendix F).

First, my inquiry was organised so that to eliminate any threat or harm to participants' physical health and peace of mind. As Stake (2005) has warned, "Those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, self-esteem" (p. 459). During surveying and interviewing I abstained from questions which could be regarded by informants as personally sensitive. Discussion of critical points in English language learning and teacher training was organised so that to support contributors in their reflexive efforts without undermining their self-esteem or questioning their mental or other abilities. I dared not to be impolite with participants or to criticise them when they misunderstood my questions or experienced difficulties in formulating ideas or making independent and well-grounded judgements over the problematic issues.

Also I ensured that my research would not affect participants' subsequent functioning in their professional contexts, i.e., would not abet any punitive actions from institutional or other authorities. For example, at the first and second stages of surveying, lecturers left classrooms upon introducing me so that no intimidation of the participating trainee teachers took place. Moreover, the survey form comprised a special section claiming the following: "The contents of this form are absolutely confidential. Information identifying the respondent will not be disclosed under any circumstances" (borrowed from Dörnyei, 2008, p. 23). Thus I formally promised not to communicate respondents' opinions to their supervisors and asserted my intention to use the data only in the format of my dissertation.

Second, participants' right to privacy was respected in every possible manner. Student teachers and lecturers were free to withhold from answering certain questions when considering them sensitive or inappropriate. In such cases no explanation was required on the part of informants. They deserved being given a free choice instead of doing something against their will; therefore no forceful actions were undertaken in regards to any individual in order to make her participate. When introducing the questionnaire form to trainee teachers, I clearly stated that they were free to decide on whether they wanted to take part in the study and also free to withdraw at any time later on. Furthermore, participants signed consent forms (see Appendix B) prior to being interviewed. By putting their signature under the text, they confirmed voluntariness of participation and agreed to publication of their responses as part of my doctoral project.

Third, before completing questionnaires and engaging in interviews, participants were provided with clear instructions and explanations of the research goals and procedures. Survey forms contained the introductory section (see Appendix C) clarifying the main purposes of the study and the algorithm for instrument handling. Student teachers were free to interrogate me about any issues pertaining to the procedure or content of questionnaires. By analogy, at the outset of each scheduled interview session, I disclosed relevant information, including my intent, the study's purposes, and participants' privacy rights. When formulating such introductory phrases, I did my best to maintain "a careful balance between giving too much detailed information and leaving out aspects of the design that may be significant to the participants" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 71). Putting it differently, I adhered to the principles of laconism and clear messaging so that to avoid the unnecessary verbalism and indicate the most important points.

Fourth, I did my best to keep my own promise for participants' confidentiality that was stated in the beginning of interaction between me and members of the research

pool. At the survey stage, in order to obtain “less self-protective and presumably more accurate answers” (Dörnyei, 2008, p. 94) on the part of trainee teachers, I ensured their anonymity since they were not required to give their personal details. Only those who agreed to join the interviewing stage revealed their names and contact details in the questionnaire form. Also, while analysing the data obtained from interviews, I coded my respondents by assigning pseudonyms to each of them so that to avoid any personal bias on my side.

Overall, in a course of my investigation every effort was made to protect the participants’ rights. I was so to say a “guest [...] in the private spaces of the [informants’] world” (Stake, 2005, p. 459), therefore I was especially responsible and careful in my research activities. During conversations with respondents I maintained a professional demeanour and attempted to minimise reactions to the individual’s comments or behaviours, although a certain degree of empathy could not be avoided. I treated my respondents with caution not to violate their concerns for privacy and professional reputation. Upon completion of each interview, the audio files were downloaded onto my personal computer for transcription. Survey forms were archived in a similar manner. All records were saved and access to the files was limited to myself. I attempted to arouse positive emotions in response to participation by thanking respondents for their earnest contributions. I also made them aware of the fact that their feedback was important for me as a person and a researcher.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to my study. First, the design and time framework of my research did not allow me to conduct a thorough document analysis to support the findings from the questionnaire and interviews. An analysis of the institutional and state-wide policies pertaining to English language teaching and teacher training in Kuwait would have enriched my research outcomes. Furthermore, reviewing course

descriptions and documents issued by the Ministry of Education or various experts would have expanded the conceptual framework of my investigation. I hope that these tasks will be achieved in subsequent studies regarding English-language learning and teaching in the Kuwaiti and other non-Anglophone, Middle-Eastern contexts.

Second, because the tasks of administering the questionnaire, conducting the interviews, and processing the data were performed by me solely, my research was subjective in nature. However, since I was the only person in contact with participants, I was able to track variations across meetings and guarantee equal treatment of informants. Furthermore, as an instructor at one of the two educational establishments where I conducted my research I was afraid that my potential informants would avoid speaking on sensitive points such as the quality of training curricula, out of fear that their opinions may become known. I attempted to overcome that by clearly stating that the objectives of my investigation aimed at revealing the gaps in English teacher training programmes in Kuwait in general, and not at one particular programme or institution. I emphasised that I acted not as an instructor or supervisor, but as an outsider interested in every new piece of information or independent and original perspective on the part of trainee teachers and lecturers that could help me to develop a body of research that change the status quo in teacher professional preparation for the better. Participants seemed reassured by this and managed to share their opinions.

Interestingly, a limitation was encountered that may be evidence of a gap in teacher training, which I discuss in my analysis. Conversations with trainee teachers and lecturers revealed that, at both institutions, the teacher-centred approach to instruction was practiced. This meant that, in teacher training classrooms, supervisors delivered ready-made bulks of information, and the task of the trainee teachers was to process those chunks diligently. They were not encouraged to critically reflect on either methodology or content. As such, trainee teachers were under the ongoing stress of the



fear of making errors. Subsequently, my participants demonstrated underdeveloped skills of independent thinking and problem solving, and thus became inhibited when I asked them questions that required going beyond familiar frameworks. Being faced with unfamiliar themes and being asked for independent consideration, some trainee teachers sought for my assistance or provided "I don't know" answers. Such poor provision presented a sharp contrast to the claims made by Schwandt (2002) concerning *critical intelligence* as the main vehicle of any conscious inquiry of problematic issues. Reacting to such timid behaviours of some students, I did my best to make the conversational environment as comfortable as possible in hopes of eliminating feelings of frustration or inferiority on the part of the research participants and to encourage them to analyse the phenomena in depth. Thankfully, some trainee teachers were able to overcome their initial hesitation with regard to self-expression and gradually contributed insightfully to discussion of critical issues, but it was a limitation nonetheless, in the extra time it took to overcome this hurdle and also potentially with regard to the level of depth to which our discussions may have been limited.

The abovementioned limitations are to be taken into account when considering the results of my study which are analysed and discussed in depth in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Discussion**

In the following chapter, I provide a detailed exploration of issues discussed in the structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In an attempt to answer my research questions, twelve themes grouped under the two topics ‘the status of English’ and ‘professional ELT training from GE perspective’ were identified and explored. Throughout the chapter I cite trainee teachers with <sub>TT</sub> and lecturers with <sub>L</sub>.

### **Topic I Analysis: The Status of English**

In this section, a detailed analysis of the six themes regarding the status of English is presented. The first theme gives a general view of the importance of English for Kuwaitis, from the perspective of research participants. The second theme demonstrates the different contexts of using English versus Arabic in domestic, professional, and general socio-linguistic environments. The third theme details the treatment of English within the educational context. The fourth theme presents varying views concerning the level of ELT in Kuwait. The fifth theme addresses issues of power and identity concerning the impact of English on Arabic. The sixth and last theme in this section describes respondents’ views regarding the future of English and Arabic within the Kuwaiti context.

#### **Theme I – 1: Importance of English for Kuwaitis**

All research participants emphasised the importance of English for Kuwaitis. The questionnaire showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents 88% agreed with the strong association between English and technological advancement; almost 93% regarded English as an important advantage when travelling abroad; nearly 95% considered it useful in the search for beneficial employment opportunities; and approximately 69% found the direct link between English language proficiency and higher level of education.

Student teachers described English as a highly appreciated medium of oral communication inside Kuwait. The country is frequented by foreigners for employment reasons, and many of them often choose to stay permanently. Local residents encounter Anglophone and non-Anglophone guests regularly, and in these encounters, they become important transmitters of cultural messages between Kuwait and other countries. Another major function of English identified by trainee teachers was regarding its use outside Kuwait: Many of the trainee teachers considered it to be the lingua franca of the world, and associated it with travelling abroad, where using English as Reham<sub>TT</sub> put it “fixes everything.”

Regarding the second function of English noted above, the use of English by Kuwaitis outside of Kuwait: Young Kuwaitis defined English as an important communication tool in the international context, and demonstrated their eagerness to progress beyond the purely utilitarian function of English language usage. It was clear in their accounts that English eased the way in unfamiliar places when travelling abroad, from everyday interactions to more intensive conversational uses. Examples of everyday uses included reading the menu at restaurants, asking for directions, and understanding signages. More intensive conversational uses of English were described as opportunities that arise during travel in which young Kuwaitis wish to delve deeper into learning about other countries’ cultures, and, at the same time, to have the ability to better educate foreigners about Kuwaiti culture. A better grasp of the English language would make intercultural dialogue during travel more likely and more reciprocal Rana<sub>TT</sub> stated that she found English to be essential in representing Kuwait to the international community, and since English language speakers outnumber Arabic speakers globally, it is easier, as she put it, “to show the real Kuwaiti people as they are” in English.

English was also considered “the language of international education and scholarship” (Kirkpatrick, 2009, p. 255) or a medium of literacy. In this respect, Holme (2004) refers to an example of Papua New Guinea, the country with a substantial Anglophone colonial history, where the perceived status of indigenous Melanesian Creole is low. Accordingly, the local language is used for grassroots communication, whereas the tasks of education and knowledge acquisition are delegated to English. Under these circumstances, English as a colonial language ensures “global access to knowledge and employment” and functions, therefore, as “a medium of literacy education in cultures where [it has] no indigenous roots” (Holme, 2004, p. 85). In Kuwait the situation is even more complicated. English is employed in the diglossic environment, where Standard Arabic co-exists with the local Kuwaiti dialect as well as dialects of non-Kuwaiti Arab expatriates. Literacy is promoted through Standard Arabic which is more grammatically difficult and strictly codified than Kuwait Arabic that is used in private everyday contexts. Subsequently, education conducted in Standard Arabic is regarded to be another form of language learning which is more complex and outdated than English-medium literacy.

My participants explained the reasons for conceptualising English as an instrument of literacy as follows. Some of the books that were relevant to the respondents’ professional studies were not available in Arabic, and those that were available seemed boring or outdated. As Hussa<sub>TT</sub> has put it:

I use it for education, knowledge and books about things I like such as photography and bio-energy. I can't find books on these in Arabic. There are only English resources on the internet or books. It's helpful to know English, and it's important.

Thus, the more attuned a student was to recent intellectual trends, the more they would want the most up to date study materials and the more enthusiastic they would

become about learning English. Hussa<sub>TT</sub> emphasised, Kuwaitis regard the inability to communicate in English as a manifestation of illiteracy; this is surprising, with their native tongue being Arabic. Among trainee teachers, English was thought to dominate in the realm of technology, natural sciences, engineering, and medical studies. Sara<sub>TT</sub> stressed that even students who were not majoring in English should have to learn the language for the sake of better information support and exchange.

In the employability field, English was often required by the country's residents to obtain better occupation opportunities. It was used during interviews for highly paid positions, where fluency in English was perceived as a competitive advantage. There is a direct correlation between speaking English and getting a good job. As May<sub>TT</sub> put it, fluency in English granted a novice player in the labour market "a superior lift" that would increase one's chances for meteoric career success.

Shoug<sub>TT</sub> commented that, in Kuwait, the ability to speak English bears a connotation of social prestige (this topic will be addressed in greater detail in the discussion section). She commented that Kuwaitis "use it [English] as criteria for judging people [about whether] they're educated or more sophisticated." Rasha<sub>TT</sub> added that there is a desire to "show off" by using English. She defined English as "a cool, hip, and modern language" that introduced Kuwaiti citizens to the worlds of international cinematography, music, and fashion.

Many other trainee teachers regarded English as a key to the world of popular culture. Dalal<sub>TT</sub> acknowledged that she started "picking up English" by watching Hollywood movies and, by default, formed an emotional attachment to the English-speaking culture. In that case, however, the initial desire to be privy to the universe of glamour and luxury through the medium of English-speaking movies gave way to more intellectual efforts. She came to realise that fluency in English provided many promising opportunities in obtaining new kinds of knowledge. Thus, the functions of

entertainment and epistemological refinement came hand by hand in the English language learning process.

I became interested to hear the passionate story of Ghada<sub>TT</sub> who preferred English, as she had been learning the language since she was 3 years old via a nanny who used English when playing with her. In fact, many child-care providers in Kuwait and the Gulf countries do not speak Arabic, and children pick up English from nannies and maids at the home. Thus, early Anglicization of local preschoolers is a matter of linguistic necessity rather than conscious choice, but may explain the leaning toward English as a linguistic preference as the child gets older.

Gradually, Ghada<sub>TT</sub> came to associate English with prestige, coolness, and success. She explained that English was perceived by many of her acquaintances as difficult to learn and understand. By putting all her efforts into digesting English spelling or grammar, she wanted to assert herself as an auspicious leader who was capable of overcoming difficulties and reaching something in her life. She compared ELT to climbing a high mountain step by step to discover a new, breathtaking perspective at the top.

The same topic of self-refinement was found in the narrative provided by Sullat<sub>TT</sub> who witnessed a higher mastery in English among schoolchildren who were brought up abroad during the invasion of Kuwait in 1991 and, during that time, studied in Europe or America. Naturally, when they came back home, they demonstrated better results in English, and she did not want to lag behind and thus concentrated on her English language studies. Her original motive of rivalry was thereby transformed into a genuine interest in English. This implication of English as a competitive advantage contributed to the shift in attitudes to Anglophone culture as observed in my research sample.

A highly positive conceptualisation of English was demonstrated by linking English to effects of globalisation and freedom. English is “cool, dynamic, and flexible”

expressed Bedoor<sub>TT</sub>. That said many Kuwaitis still viewed the Anglophone culture as alien and intrusive. Against this setting of generally eager acceptance of English, the following case reported by Noor<sub>TT</sub> demonstrates the conflict between the recent trend of Anglicisation as part of extensive intellectual scaffolding and traditional values of the local society. On a visit to a public school during teaching practice, she was asked by a pupil if she used English in her everyday life. Upon getting the affirmative answer, the boy said that his father considered foreign language learning not important. The little adversary of ELT refused to take part in the class, and was confident in his actions because he knew his parents would support such conduct.

The curious reaction of the 8-year-old pupil could not be explained merely by his individual situation. In Kuwait, children were brought up in complete orthodoxy concerning parents' authority and family values. Relying on his father's opinion, the boy sincerely defended the traditional lifestyle with no independent thought about his own competitiveness regarding knowledge-sensitive efficiencies and linguistic fluency.

Kuwaiti disposition toward language learning was formed by many factors, including comparative usage of English and Arabic in various contexts, social status and educational level of parents, ethnic background and so on. The generally positive acceptance of the English medium tolerated many exceptions that made the socio-linguistic environment in Kuwait heterogeneous and complex.

It is worth noting here that implications voiced by participants in regard to this particular ideational theme reverberated in their reactions to other topical categories. These links were provided by analysis of Rho-values that showed the following. Item 14 of the questionnaire tackling the popularity of English as the language of technology correlated with the connotations of English as the global/international language (item 12); as a kind of aggressor in respect to other world languages (item 19); as affecting Kuwait's Arabic culture (item 21); and as a learning advantage when taught since the

first grade (item 25). Item 14 also corresponded with trainee teachers' eagerness to learn how English might influence other languages (item 33). Item 15, English as an aid when travelling abroad, was linked to the idea of studying all college courses in English (item 32). Realisation of English as a competitive advantage in the labour market (item 16) led trainee teachers to think that Kuwaitis' knowledge of standard Arabic (*Fus 'ha*) was decreasing because of the popularity of English (item 26).

Statistical relationships between questionnaire elements helped to inform the association between the themes emerging in the qualitative data. The overview of those links suggests that Kuwaitis' perception of the importance of English cannot not be separated from the above-mentioned topics.

### **Theme I – 2: Contexts of Using English vs. Arabic – “A Secret Language”**

Analysis of the responses to the strongly interrelated items numbers 4-11 of the questionnaire provided a framework to interpret participants' interview narratives concerning the comparative presence of the English and Arabic languages in their lives. According to the data from the surveys, the former was associated with outer environments, while the latter was restricted mainly to domestic settings.

#### ***Domestic context.***

Table 1 shows that approximately 60% of trainee teachers spoke only Arabic with their parents, while almost 33% of them established dialogue with the elder generation in both languages, although a preference was given to the mother-tongue. Only 4% of participants used Arabic and English in equal proportions, and the number of those who spoke only English or preferred it in conversations with parents was insignificant.



What language do you use when speaking to your parents?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	118	60.2	60.2	60.2
Only English	2	1.0	1.0	61.2
Both Equally	8	4.1	4.1	65.3
Both but more Arabic	64	32.7	32.7	98.0
Both but more English	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 1. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 4*

The situation revealed in Table 1 became reversed in regards to socialisation with sisters and/or brothers, i.e., fellow young people. According to Table 2, 51% of the pool spoke both Arabic and English (the mother-tongue is leading) with siblings, while less than one-third of informants used the mother-tongue with younger siblings (31.6%). These proportions imply that domestic environments were more traditional in terms of language choice. The variable of age also affected linguistic decisions – the older a person was, the higher the probability of her or him using Arabic at home.

What language do you use when speaking to your sisters/brothers?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	62	31.6	31.6	31.6
Only English	2	1.0	1.0	32.7
Both Equally	12	6.1	6.1	38.8
Both but more Arabic	100	51.0	51.0	89.8
Both but more English	20	10.2	10.2	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 2. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 5.*

Complicating the theme of traditional language within the home circle, the language speaking patterns applied to the generally bilingual interactions that would occur with domestic helpers (maids, child-care providers, cooks, gardeners, drivers) represent great diversity (see Table 3). Almost 27% practiced more English in bilingual contexts, while equal percentages of respondents (20.4% on each side) utilized either only English or more Arabic than English in bilingual contexts. The difference between those who used only Arabic and those who spoke both languages equally was

insignificant (17.3% and 15.3%, respectively). The choice of conversational medium in those circumstances probably depended on the home country of domestic helper as well as the period of their staying in Kuwait (those who have been working in Middle East region for some time were able to speak elementary Arabic.) Therefore, the choice of language in that case was affected by convenience and agreement between the agents of communication to arrive at mutual understanding in a course of negotiation.

What language do you speak when speaking to your (cooks, drivers, etc.)?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	34	17.3	17.3	17.3
Only English	40	20.4	20.4	37.8
Both Equally	30	15.3	15.3	53.1
Both but more Arabic	40	20.4	20.4	73.5
Both but more English	52	26.5	26.5	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 3. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 7.*

Several unique research observations were derived from the listed tables. For one, judging from lecturers' narrations, even elder Kuwaitis whose profession was related to ELT preferred to speak Arabic at home. Jude<sub>L</sub> explained that English was used in her family to help the youngsters (who studied at English-medium private schools) with their home assignments. Apart from this activity, all home conversations were in Arabic. It is clear that these people perceived English as the tool of their profession rather than the medium of social communication. These attitudes can be found with many foreign language teachers worldwide. However, Jude<sub>L</sub> often heard her children fluently communicating in English between each other when left alone. She hypothesised that her children might be too shy to expose their linguistic skills in front of her since she was an English teacher.

Noor<sub>TT</sub>, a trainee teacher who thus resided closer to those "secret" speakers of English in terms of age, provided a clue to such enigmatic behaviour. Noor<sub>TT</sub> was raised in a family of Bedouin background, where nobody from the elder generation spoke any

foreign tongue, and independently took a deep interest in English from an early age. She studied the language from videos brought by her elder brother on her request. At school, she came to associate English with success in life and learning. She did her best to get the difficult language on the tips of her fingers. In secondary school, she persuaded her sister to join the extra-curriculum English Club with her.

Along the path of refining her English language learning, she gradually alienated herself from the home environment. She became so accustomed and attached to English in her words and thoughts that she used it in the family where only younger members had elementary command of the language. She cited her sister who often asked: “Please, when you’re sitting with us, don’t talk in English. Try to talk in Arabic. You have to. You’re going to get married and have children.” These words show that this particular young Kuwaiti associates the mother tongue with traditional values wrapped around the institution of marriage. Her relatives lacking any English-medium educational background regard English as an outer, intrusive phenomenon linked to the hostile world of ‘others.’

Noor’s<sub>STT</sub> story takes a sad turn when she reports that she found herself rejected by her own relatives. She escaped into her ELT studies as a kind of asylum. The interviewee defined English as a “secret” language, something belonging only to her and being a reward for her diligent academic accomplishment. She also explained a keen effort in self-Anglicisation by her solitude in childhood and described her attempts to speak with her family in English not as a consciously rebellious act but rather a manifestation of her poor command of Arabic.

Considering Noor’s<sub>STT</sub> account in combination with the story of Jude<sub>L</sub> about her children using English only when the parent was absent, English might be regarded by young Kuwaitis as their “secret,” something that identifies them as unique from older generations. The conscious escape from English-speaking elders during communication

in the foreign tongue might be regarded as a wish to maintain the atmosphere of privacy and secrecy. In interviewee accounts where parents spoke only Arabic, children had a chance to discuss their affairs without the fear of being overheard or misunderstood. Alternatively, such behavioural patterns could result from shyness or shame to reveal possible mistakes in pronunciation or grammar.

To conclude I came across another interesting reasoning for usage of English at home. The incident described similar symptoms of the Anglicisation ‘craze’ portrayed above but with a different disguise. Bibi<sub>TT</sub> would insist on speaking English with her relatives at home although they were not able to understand her. Reactions of the family were welcoming and supporting since she explained her behaviour by the desire to refine her command of the language for her professional advancement. That type of one-sided English-medium communication, according to her, was needed “to get extra practice and not forget [the language].”

### ***Professional context.***

While the home and peer contexts created a wide array of chances for code-switching with a domination of Arabic, the professional environment was oriented more toward English, judging from trainee teachers’ reports of conversational patterns with teachers outside the classrooms (see Table 4).

What language do you use when speaking to your teachers outside the classroom?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
Only English	36	18.4	18.4	20.4
Both Equally	38	19.4	19.4	39.8
Both but more Arabic	42	21.4	21.4	61.2
Both but more English	76	38.8	38.8	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 4. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 8.*

Table 4 shows that the majority of trainee teachers used both languages in communications with lecturers when no studies took place. Given code-switching as the

most popular conversational technique, almost 39% of participants spoke English. This figure is expectable since the responses were elicited from future English teachers. It is possible that the results would have been different, if students with other majors took part in the survey.

The difference between those who preferred Arabic in the bilingual mode, those who used the two languages alternatively, and those who spoke only English was insignificant (21.4%, 19.4%, and 18.4%, respectively). The choice of the language when talking to teachers outside the classroom was evidently dictated by the student's fluency in English. The Rho-coefficients compiled for the present study reported that the fluency factor was predicted by one's exposure to the foreign language in the family and the linguistic preference when watching TV. Conversations were likely to take place in English when regarding professional topics, and when a trainee teacher experienced difficulties with expressing a term in the foreign language they switched to the native tongue. Generally, participants found it more appropriate to discuss their professional affairs, especially those related to business, science, and technology, in English. Many explained the trend as a matter of convenience: in their words, Arabic was less precise and accurate in regard to scientific or high-tech terminology than English.

The lecturers, on the other hand, gave preference to English when communicating with trainee teachers both inside and outside the classrooms. Lectures and conversations occurring in the classroom were conducted in English only, whereas during class breaks or office meetings, the choice of language varied depending on the intricacies of the situation and topic. As for socialisation with colleagues, Wafa<sub>L</sub> used an interesting phrase: "We're supposed to talk in English." In the absence of any clear instruction imposed by the university in regards to speaking only English on its territory, Anglicisation of professionals' discourses seems to be the lecturers' initiative.

The issue of supervisors consciously choosing English as a primary language for their professional communication and sometimes switching to Arabic to discuss details of curricula or programmes can be commented using the notions of *claimed* identity and *assigned* identity. According to Johnston (2003), the claimed identity is the one asserted by individuals through words and actions, while the assigned identity is the one “encoded, formally or informally, in the sociocultural and political structures of the context” (p. 108). Putting it differently, each lecturer is inevitably assigned to the English-speaking identity due to country-wide policies which put English above Arabic in educational environments. They are structured in such a way that English becomes “not merely an instrument for communication, it is a value one identifies with for the social functions the language is seen as serving, its utility in the linguistic market” (Phillipson, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, the above stated academic spaces should be envisaged as traditional foreign language programmes, from the perspective defined by Modiano (2005), which aim at positioning themselves as “an idealized and supposedly prestigious speech community” (p. 27). The connotation of prestige is attached to the English language as a phenomenon taking the central position across the three dimensions of the lecturers’ community of practice, as specified below.

According to Clarke (2008), there are the following elements which construct any group of individuals having shared professional characteristics and aspirations: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. By mutual engagement the researcher means “participation in endeavor or practice whose meanings are negotiated among participants” (Clarke, 2008, p. 30). In application to my research site, lecturers take part in prioritisation of English as a medium of professional discourse. Next, joint enterprise, which is “the focus of activity that links members of a community of practice” (ibid., p. 31), tackles foreign language learning/teaching in Kuwait’s tertiary education establishments. Finally, shared repertoire means “the common resources for

creating meaning that result from engagement in joint enterprise” (ibid.). In my case, this is the English language as is used by members of lecturers’ community to mark their inclusion to the professional group of those who train Kuwaiti future teachers of that language. Therefore, employing the foreign tongue as a tool of information and meaning sharing between lecturers is evidently part of the corporate ideology, a particular sort of assumption made into an unwritten policy that implies immersion of lecturers and partly trainee teachers into the Anglophone culture on their professional sites as well as code-switching regarded as an implicit norm within the population of Kuwait’s ELT professionals.

### ***General socio-linguistic context.***

In regard to trainee teachers, the general socio-linguistic environment outside the domestic and professional frameworks was created by means of communicating with friends, reading literature, and using mass-media channels. The latter three issues are in this section for the following reason. Data retrieval through literature, TV, and radio contributes to the firmament of the ‘standard grid’ that is influential on any individual’s behaviour in a social group. The grid includes any ideological rules of thumb, assumptions, idiosyncrasies, or beliefs that are acquired through various informational paths, as well as a set of characteristics that allow people to engage in any shared activity. For example, those who listen to radio programmes with restricted access via language (English-language BBC channels that are therefore understandable only to English-speaking Kuwaitis) would be able to socialise about what they experienced only with those who share this experience. They would have more common topics for discussion, and this is how smaller social networks are constructed.

Language speaking patterns which pertain to socialising with friends were similar to the case of siblings (see Table 2 and 5). According to the survey data, more than half of the participants (54%) code-switched, with a heavier reliance on the mother

tongue. It was interesting that the percentages of those who practiced other language-speaking modes (only Arabic, Arabic and English equally, and both but more English) were relatively the same during communication with friends (15.3%, 14.3% and 15.3%, respectively).

What language do you use when speaking to your friends?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	30	15.3	15.3	15.3
Only English	2	1.0	1.0	16.3
Both Equally	28	14.3	14.3	30.6
Both but more Arabic	106	54.1	54.1	84.7
Both but more English	30	15.3	15.3	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 5. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 6*

Moving beyond social interactions, with regard to reading habits, a large portion of trainee teachers (31%) had bilingual practices (see Table 6) without preference for any particular tongue, while Arabic-only reading had the lowest score (6%). When respondents read in both languages, 27.6% relied heavier on English, while 20.4% preferred Arabic.

In what language do you prefer to read magazines and books?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	12	6.1	6.1	6.1
Only English	28	14.3	14.3	20.4
Both Equally	62	31.6	31.6	52.0
Both but more Arabic	40	20.4	20.4	72.4
Both but more English	54	27.6	27.6	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 6. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 9.*

However, both TV and radio broadcasting channels were associated with English in trainee teachers' minds. Arabic remained backstage while English dominated as the most popular language of mass media, whether as an element of the code-switching mode or used independently of the mother tongue.



In what language do you prefer to watch TV?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
Only English	72	36.7	36.7	37.8
Both Equally	34	17.3	17.3	55.1
Both but more Arabic	6	3.1	3.1	58.2
Both but more English	82	41.8	41.8	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 7. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 10.*

In what language do you prefer to listen to the radio/music?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Only Arabic	10	5.1	5.1	5.1
Only English	44	22.4	22.4	27.6
Both Equally	46	23.5	23.5	51.0
Both but more Arabic	38	19.4	19.4	70.4
Both but more English	58	29.6	29.6	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

*Table 8. Frequency analysis for questionnaire item 11.*

The point was illustrated by Hussa<sub>TT</sub> whose hobbies were photography and bio-energy. Since there were no books on these topics in Arabic, her reading habits were English-oriented. When there were two versions of information sources, in the foreign language and the mother tongue, she read the English one first and afterward sometimes checked the Arabic version.

The motives behind respondents' language choices provided consistent insight. Abeer<sub>TT</sub> explained that she stopped reading Arabic in high school because she simply lost interest. That loss of interest occurred when she found herself connected to the foreign world through Kuwait TV Channel 2, where all programmes were delivered in English. She recalled that it was the richness of new information and not so much any cultural aspects that fascinated her at first. There was no English in primary school in those days, so she learnt the foreign language through TV: "My connection to the world was through TV. ... I know things about history, like the American Civil War and

World War II. ... I got [all my information] through English.” Gradually she started associating English with knowledge.

With lecturers, I was not surprised to hear that the significant part of their social activities required intensive use of English. One-way communication in the foreign tongue occurred when they watched TV, read popular or professional literature, and wrote messages to English-speaking friends or colleagues. As Jude<sub>L</sub> explained, the matter of preferring English was not a conscious act of protesting against the mother tongue, but rather a habit dictated by professional background: “Most of the time I listen [to BBC Arabia] during my driving. That’s the only means to listen to English, especially from native speakers.” That was a convenient way to get updated on the recent trends in oral English as delivered by Anglophone individuals. Arabic was the predominant language for local news and updates. As Anwar<sub>L</sub> stressed, local news lost its cultural flavour when translated into English.

To conclude, the stream of mass culture in Kuwait was permeated by English, which signified an important link between the local and the global environment. One of the possible reasons for trainee teachers and their lecturers to watch English programmes and listen to English radio broadcasting channels might be a wish to keep up with the modern, up-to-date varieties of oral English in order to fulfil their professional objectives. There might be another reason for the trend, however, such as a conscious effort to anglicise the local culture, performed through the minds of the younger generation via popular information and entertainment paths.

### **Theme I – 3: English in the Educational Context**

There were several reasons that guided me to look into participants’ opinions concerning the necessity of English language studies at school and tertiary institutions. First, I wanted to explore their awareness of the current ELT policy in Kuwait, which was gradually moving towards Anglicisation. Second, I aimed at creating possible

scenarios of English language teaching in the future. Analysis of their interview answers together with questionnaire responses has suggested that the majority of future ELT teachers are proponents of the aggressive proliferation of English in the local learning environment, at all levels of education.

The questionnaire provided a clue to attitudes towards obligatory introduction of English language studies at the earlier school stages. Almost 89% either strongly or plainly agreed that teaching children English in preschool before they entered first grade was an advantage for their learning experience. Moreover, almost 86% of survey participants were sure that all Kuwaitis should learn English. During interview sessions, respondents mentioned various grounds for imposing English on school children and college/university students in a rather authoritarian manner. The reasons behind the decision were traced through the links observed in the questionnaire.

The rho-correlations demonstrate that questionnaire item 25, teaching English to pre-schoolers was an advantage was correlated with conceptualisation of English as the language of technology (item 14), English as a signifier of better job placement (item 16), and English as “the killer” of other languages (item 19). It spoke on the fact that respondents associated the presence of English in the learning curricula with prestige and technological advancement, while being aware of potential dangers it might impose on the local socio-linguistic context. Analysis of interview discourses helped to investigate how far Kuwaitis were ready to go in promoting the pro-English learning strategy.

Meanwhile, correlations between the following questions in the survey; all Kuwaitis’ should learn to speak English (item 17), Kuwaitis’ knowledge of standard Arabic decreasing because English is gaining popularity (item 26), students being prepared to teach English should study all their courses at the college in English (item 32), and the importance of learning techniques to teach English without affecting the

Arabic culture (item 34) indicated that the prospect of complete Anglicisation of the learning environment brought respondents to explore the status of the mother tongue. The process of interviewing provided valuable insights concerning the attitude of negligence towards Arabic and endorsement of early English introduction, as discussed below.

### *At school.*

The majority of respondents expressed strong confidence in the necessity to introduce English at Kuwaiti schools, starting in the earliest grades, and on a regular basis, without even considering the children's or parent's position regarding language preference. Proponents of Anglicisation provided the following motives for the introduction of such a policy: English was popular, English was everywhere, English would be used by today's schoolchildren throughout the next decades extensively, in every realm of life, including education, career, business, and entertainment. According to Fay<sub>TT</sub>, "children should be exposed to English whether they liked it or not for their own sake."

Judging from interview responses, the overwhelming proportion of trainee teachers argued that Kuwait's educational policy should go through wide-scale Anglicisation regardless of learners' attitudes to and readiness for English. It is believed that the enforced Anglicisation of the local education system and the urgent promotion of English could help the country to catch up with the international community in social and technological advancement. This belief is illustrated by Manar<sub>TT</sub>:

I heard of a girl who has half a brain. [British doctors] cut it and removed it. The girl was okay after five or six weeks. We have to learn from them. We can't learn from them in the Arabic language. We have to learn from them in the English language.

Maha<sub>TT</sub> emphatically stated:

We need a more sophisticated generation. We have to improve our education.

It's one of the elements that help the country be open to other countries and to reach the level of the other countries. You know the situation of the Arab world.

Reham<sub>TT</sub> compared English to Latin as a language that used to function as an international language in ancient multilingual society. She proceeds:

It's not English itself. It's the importance of the common language. It was Latin before, and English replaced it. They had to learn Latin because it was the international language. It's the government's responsibility to give us this information. Children have to know. We have to improve our society. We have to be the best and give something to our society. They need enough knowledge.

They have to learn the international language.

Participants explained this authoritarian position with the assumption that younger children could not understand what was profitable for them and tended to oppose any activity requiring additional time and effort. Another possible reason might be cultural inertia or disapproval of parents. Noor<sub>TT</sub> stressed that, judging from her personal experience, Bedouin communities would rather reject inclusion of English to school curricula, should it be an elective subject. In her opinion, learners should decide for themselves the appropriateness of studying English at later phases of education, while at school the subject should be taken as compulsory. Noor<sub>TT</sub> (and not she alone) hoped that learners would gradually realise the benefits and improvements that English might bring to their lives. Children would engage in EFL studies more consciously in secondary rather than primary school.

Only a few respondents suggested introducing English at the earlier stages of school education as an elective. Diaa<sub>TT</sub> suggested that authoritarian imposition of EFL might result in negative reactions towards the infusion of English in society among school children, an attitude that would downgrade knowledge-scaffolding outcomes of

educational processes. Fay<sub>TT</sub> mentioned the experience of American and European schools where a wider choice of foreign languages such as French, German, and Spanish are offered. Some Kuwaitis might want to study those languages instead of English, and the country's policymakers should consider providing students with this opportunity. Generally speaking, even those calling for English to be taken as an elective in the earlier school grades regarded the chances for adoption of this approach to be rather low.

***In tertiary education.***

In regard to the issue of “ostensible choices” (as Alia<sub>TT</sub> put it) between English or Arabic as a language of instruction in tertiary education establishments, the overwhelming majority of participants suggested making curricular bilingual, with a substantially stronger preference for English. None of them wanted to undermine the preciousness of Arabic as a mother tongue or to erase it completely, but Arabic-speaking future trainee teachers associated their native language with domesticity and daily communication. Gena<sub>TT</sub> said: “We know it from our home, so we don't need Arabic [at college].” English contrastingly was strongly connected to the world of knowledge and ambitious career building, which normally started during the tertiary education phase. It is worth noting here that from the survey 60% of participants either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ to name English the language of technology and business while Arabic as the language of religion and traditions.

Business, engineering, medicine, and an array of other professions related to technology or natural sciences were defined as pro-English. Student teachers were eager to use Arabic only for general subjects, while English was considered appropriate for specific majors. Their logic in proposing such differentiation was of interest. Preference was given to English for it being substantially represented in the local education system as well as its being the chief medium of the Internet. As previously mentioned, about 30

years ago exact sciences started being associated with English. Subsequently, curricula of departments at Kuwait's colleges/universities with majors in engineering, medicine, architecture, mathematics, and science replicated Anglophone learning environments in terms of resources and methods. Inseparable from this point is the fact that many teachers delivering the above-mentioned subjects were native speakers of English or used it as the international *lingua franca*.

Furthermore, the proposal for English-medium instruction was supported by conceptualisations of the language and the associated culture as being more accurate, precise, and advanced. These conceptualisations are intimately linked with the concept of progress, with which the Anglophone West is associated. As Shoug<sub>TT</sub> put it, "If the research, information and technology is coming from them [the West] then why complicate it with Arabic definitions?" Participants suggested teaching medicine, engineering, and a range of other expertise-sensitive realms of knowledge to Kuwaitis in English for the sake of better communication within the global family of professionals. They expressed confidence that those fellow citizens who used to study medicine in Arabic would not be able to participate in important international narrow-field events or interact effectively with Anglophone or international patients. Nobody considered an alternative case when a doctor who had received English-medium instruction failed to communicate effectively with Arab-speaking individuals.

Engaging participants in an in-depth analysis of the issue, I managed to elicit arguments concerning motivation and the extent of personal necessity for English language studies, so far as educational processes progressed from primary and secondary school to colleges and universities. Student teachers supposed that antagonism toward English would vanish as soon as learners matured. The most commonly cited explanation for that assumption was the ability of elder students to judge what medium better suited their personal and professional goals at later stages of

education: “They’re old enough to decide what’s best for them,” Noor<sub>TT</sub> said, meaning that college/university students more consciously define the degree of importance that the English and Arabic languages have for their academic progress.

The issue of English competing with Arabic in Kuwait’s education system could be empirically observed at KU, where exact sciences are delivered in English.

Interviewees’ personal experiences revealed that Anglicisation of the local learning environment was not as smooth as it would seem when discussed empirically. Speaking about their personal experiences of studying English at secondary school and tertiary education establishments, trainee teachers lamented about the poor quality of EFL instruction. Alia<sub>TT</sub> acknowledged the gap in quality of English instruction between various types of educational establishments:

In government schools, we take only one hour [per day] of English. I remember months would pass without the teacher hearing me speak a word. Here I am very nervous to talk or ask questions in class, not like the girls from private schools...It’s very easy for them...you can tell they are not nervous or worried when they talk.

Halla<sub>TT</sub> noted the unsatisfactorily low quality of English grammar presentation at earlier levels of the state education system in his comment, “We studied it in the schools and it wasn’t that good. Our grammar and all the English we have comes from TV or traveling. We didn’t get anything from school.” Thus, while being eager to accept English-medium curricula, many research participants stressed that they felt themselves unprepared for such a crucial step in language proficiency. The next subsection will discuss how the current quality of ELT in Kuwait seems inappropriate for large-scale Anglicisation of tertiary education.



#### **Theme I – 4: Level of ELT in Kuwait – Panic and Frustration**

According to the questionnaire, 82% of participants attended government schools while 15% attended private Arabic-medium schools and only 2% studied at private English-medium institutions. The overwhelming majority, approximately 78%, were exposed to English in primary school, while 13% had their first EFL experience at the secondary-school phase. Only 9% started studying English before school age. Thus, reflections over the quality of ELT in Kuwait referred mainly to the local government school system.

Regarding the overall quality of ELT in Kuwait, when discussing the appropriateness of applying English as the main medium of instruction in tertiary education establishments, many respondents commented on the low level of proficiency in English that was observed within the trainee teacher population. Some of them like Gena<sub>TT</sub> were ready to study complex content in the foreign language relying on translation and reassuring themselves with the notion that, “There’s nothing called ‘easy’ in the education process.” Others experienced a sense of panic when faced with such a prospect, due to being ill at ease with the level of EFL training that they had received up to that point. Everybody blamed public schools for a low level of English language proficiency.

According to respondents who attended government education establishments, good marks were often put for obedience and diligence rather than for progress in academic skills. When it came to English instruction, their teachers’ pronunciation and vocabulary database left much to be desired. Consequently, those who entered colleges failed to understand their tutors who spoke higher-level English. “How could you have spent this whole time learning English and you don’t understand what’s going on in class?” Reham<sub>TT</sub> questioned. A probable answer came from Laila<sub>TT</sub> who said:

It [English instruction] stays at the same level through primary, secondary, and high school. It's the same thing. I was shocked when I came to college. In high school, it was really easy, but when I came here, it was a shock.

Due to low-grade and repetitive language instruction in the overwhelming majority of government-school classes, the learning process was easy for most pupils. Upon progressing to the higher levels of education, they were surprised to be dealing with advanced grammar and frustrated by being unable to communicate freely. Participants confessed that dictionaries became an important tool for coping with the department's curriculum, and they often had to ask their lecturers to double the content into Arabic, which was considered unacceptable.

From trainee teachers' perspectives, the whole ELT methodology in Kuwait was reported to be outdated. Students were given vocabulary lists devoid of contextual examples to teach them how to use the words. Another area of weakness mentioned was English language verb tenses, which were explained vaguely, if at all. Diaa<sub>TT</sub> said that when learning about the difference between the past and present verb tenses, they were taught clues, such as to look for so called "key words" (third-person pronouns) in order to add the "s/es"-inflections to the verbs to signify the present indefinite tense, but not given enough practice to make sense of such rules. Years passed, and it was only at college that she reportedly learnt to use the rule more consciously. "They have no idea about the language," Diaa<sub>TT</sub> concluded. Presentation of complex linguistic definitions to younger children also hindered the process of knowledge acquisition – causing misunderstandings and the "feeling of being lost," as she put it.

Besma<sub>TT</sub> captured the essence of the accumulation of weak English instruction in her previous school experience:

We spend years on ‘Hello, my name is...’ and ‘How do you do,’ as well as memorizing set-book texts. How is that going to help us in university when we actually have to read, understand, and express in English?

It may sound like a bad joke, but this seems to be the norm of EFL in the government schools that respondents attended. These emotions of disappointment and discomfort were combined with the strong desire to improve EFL skills and instruction, which brought students to join the global Anglophone education community. The benefit of increasing the level of English language proficiency went to learners who were strong enough to cope with the drawbacks of their EFL experiences, daring to find alternative means to access the language and improve their skills. Bedoor<sub>TT</sub> acknowledged: “I used to listen to songs and try to figure out the words and write them down...then I’d memorize them and say it all day in my head...this was better than any school work I took.” Those participants who survived weak EFL instruction and the socio-linguistic shock awaiting them at the tertiary level had the most to say about how to refine the ELT system in Kuwait.

Regarding suggestions for improvement, all respondents had their own ideas and proposals concerning the ways to improve the delivery of EFL at the school level. First of all, most of them argued for using updated textbooks with stronger emphasis on cultural issues to get the pupils interested in the subject. Another suggestion regarding content was to orient topics to children’s age-specific skills and behaviours to improve interest. For example, Shoug<sub>TT</sub> relying on her personal experience of helping her younger sister with English homework assignments suggested utilising a reformed model in Kuwait’s learning environment at earlier stages of schooling that delivered grammar and vocabulary through games. From her viewpoint, teachers at schools should use more interactive learning tools such as quizzes, songs, and creative contests.

Other suggestions included allowing English teachers to accompany their pupils to the classes where other subjects were delivered in Arabic and commenting on things in English (there were also proposals concerning teaching some subjects in Arabic during the first term and then switching to English during the second half of the school year). Pupils thus could operate multiple types of learning in the bilingual mode. Mostly, trainee teachers were highly troubled by the rigidity of lesson plans designed by the Kuwait ministry of education. Hussa<sub>TT</sub> lamented: “You have one form of lesson plan. You can't change anything. You have to stick with everything.” They suggest greater flexibility and creativity to make the learning process more efficient and fun. They also emphasized once again the importance of earlier introduction of English in the public school system.

As mentioned before, almost 89% of participants agreed with the assumption that exposing children to EFL starting in the first grade would improve the subsequent learning process. Heba<sub>TT</sub> stressed the importance of earlier introduction:

Early is better. Their minds are still fresh. They could have the natural balance for each language. If we have good teachers for each language, Arabic and English, they will have the normal balance for each language.

However, in the course of discussions, some respondents doubted if the goal could be achieved by means of existing methodologies where reading dull texts, memorising exhaustive word lists, and performing drill-based oral or written assignments frightened the beginners away from the language. For progress to be achieved, a number of factors would have to be taken into account. For one, the local teaching force should be mobilised to implement better methods and resources, to improve their own knowledge of English, and to create an entertaining and interactive new curriculum. That said, what remains unknown is whether such an approach is the appropriate one for the Kuwaiti environment, and whether it would yield the hoped-for results.

### **Theme I – 5: Impact of English on Arabic – Issues of Power and Identity**

When assessing the importance of English in their native sociocultural context, trainee teachers were able to move beyond the dichotomy of good versus bad. Some provided deep insights concerning language as a tool of power and identity formation. The questionnaire showed that more than 81% named English popular because it was the tongue of powerful states. Almost 45% agreed that English may be considered a potential “killer” language in relation to other, less widely spoken, tongues. Moreover, 63% stated that the local Arabic-medium culture was affected by EFL.

Analysis of Rho-correlations showed that item 13 of the questionnaire – English is popular because it belonged to powerful states was strongly linked to issues pertaining to the English language cultures (item 20) and their relevance for clearer understanding of EFL (item 24) as well as the point of fluent communication in English as a signifier of better intellectual development (item 28) and one’s eagerness to learn about world-wide practices of dealing with the English language outside the inner circle (item 30).

The higher status of English-medium education in the minds of Kuwaitis (item 28) was also observed as a correlating phenomenon in regards to English being a ‘killer’ language (item 19) and awareness of English language culture (item 20) which, in their turn, strongly complemented each other and led the train of thought into the same direction of including the English Language Culture to the local teacher preparation programmes (item 31) which showed the highest index of correlation with the stated above (item 19) and conceiving how English affected other languages (item 33).

The complexity of these ideational links demonstrated that ELT trainee teachers were able to identify not only the utilitarian benefits of English but also its dubious role in contact with non-Anglophone environments. When explaining the diversity of typical

functions of English in Kuwait's socio-linguistic and cultural context, many respondents cited their parents. According to Gena<sub>TT</sub>:

[My] mother put in my mind the idea that one day the Americans will be the greatest force. It won't be like today, when there's Japan and others. After maybe five years, it will be the greatest power in our country. So she said it's better to know English than not to know it. She said: 'If you know the language of those who are more powerful than you, you're safe.'

Many others alluded to "the language of the enemies," and Abeer<sub>TT</sub> expanded the idea referring to the wisdom of keeping one's enemies closer than friends:

Many people think we should learn English. There's an old saying that to conquer the enemy, you should know their language. Sometimes it's the American status in the world. We have to know English so we can defend ourselves.

Those sayings indicated a level of caution in the elder generations of Kuwaitis in regards to Anglophone countries. Kuwaitis of younger ages, especially those who deal in English professionally, have picked up new verses for old tunes about language and power. Laila<sub>TT</sub> formulated the following vision:

"I like English in other ways. Through English, I can speak to people all over the world. ... It would be a good way if it were a means to communicate between each other to make a better world through English. ... It depends on how we look at [the topic of] global English. Is it a way to address our enemies or do we use it with hope because everyone is familiar with it?"

Student teachers acknowledged the dangerous potential of EFL/ESL as the medium of Anglophone cultural expansion and the subsequent deterioration of the local traditionally Arabic contexts. Because of this, some expressed the desire to learn English as a tool of functional communication and negotiation rather than to use it to

replace their native tongue. Many lamented the various prejudices that the global world started holding against Arabs upon the upsurge of terrorism. “We’re good people. Why would they look at us that way?” Laila<sub>TT</sub> exclaimed when discussing the issue. She went on to share personal views of language learning as related to global understanding:

Regardless of America’s status in the world, we have to know others [foreigners]. We’re in an age where we should get to know each other. We came from the same origin, the same mother and father, whether we’re Japanese, American, Arab, or Israeli. We should know the language just to get to know the others [foreigners].

Rana<sub>TT</sub> put it thusly: “English will always be a language to communicate with everyone.” Besides the common topics of communication such as entertainment, travelling, and education, many Kuwaitis today choose English to deliver messages of intercultural tolerance to the non-Arab world, as Rana<sub>TT</sub> put it, “we need to explain ourselves.”

Many participants regarded language as part of one’s identity that was created by an array of factors including culture and traditions. They vacillated between a keen affection for English as a medium of knowledge acquisition and communication across borders, and the integrity of one’s Arab-speaking personality or identity. Noor<sub>TT</sub> shared her experience of falling in love with English to such an extent that she prayed to Allah in this language as a child. As she matured, she realised that, despite having switched to thinking in English, she still preserved her Arab identity. Even though she acknowledged that adoption of English as a point of departure from her family, she still complied with the Muslim religion and observed ties of blood with her relatives:

They reject me because I’m in the English department. My aunts and uncles say, ‘Don’t talk to her. She’s American or something. She’s free and open-minded.’ I

think, ‘No, I’m still Bedouin. I have my own traditions. I speak in English, but it’s not my lifestyle.’

Sulla<sub>TT</sub> shared her position, stating, “Arabic will always be our identity.” It is the language of Islam and the Qur’an. I found that nobody dared to deny the importance of the mother tongue. At the same time, the recent tendency of English-speaking Kuwaitis has been to regard one’s Arabic background as inferior to the newly acquired English-medium culture. Sara<sub>TT</sub> expressed this as negligence with regard to the mother tongue:

We don’t have this [feeling of] belonging to our language. We’re adopting the other languages. It’s great to be open-minded and accept whatever, but I think you have to belong to your language and be proud of it. I think you have to have this feeling.

This mood of negligence toward the Arab language has been created by many factors, including the superficial rush for prestige or the career necessity to speak a foreign tongue in order to earn more. Whatever the reasons for the attitudinal down slope with regard to Arabic, none of the respondents contested this point: Interest in the mother language was tragically decreasing.

Almost 63% of survey respondents expressed awareness that Kuwait’s Arabic culture was affected by the English language culture. They perceived Standard Arabic or *Fus’ha* as archaic and restricted to religious or official matters. What were the reasons behind *Fus’ha* losing its status of primary communication and knowledge-acquisition tool? Some experts (Asfoor, 2008) said that it happened because the key mass-media channels were dominated with *Amia*, or Kuwaiti Arabic, but participants mostly agreed that Standard Arabic stopped being used in the daily context because of the influence of English on the culture. More than 64% stated that Kuwaitis’ knowledge of the local standard Arabic dialect was decreasing because English was gaining



popularity (though it is worth mentioning that several “drawbacks” of *Fus’ha* were also cited as additional reasons, other than the advantages of English alone).

Hussa<sub>TT</sub> observed the tendency of Arabic authors to generalise things, while the Anglophone writers featured narrower definitions and clearer grammar structures. More than half of the respondents mentioned the difficult grammar of *Fus’ha* as the main obstacle for its regular utilisation. “Every time I read grammar books in Arabic, I open the book and I can’t figure anything out,” Manar<sub>TT</sub> stated. Reham<sub>TT</sub> also said that children were afraid of the mother tongue because of its complex structure. Calling for modernisation of *Fus’ha*, she alluded to Old English, the structure of which was similar to the one of the Standard Arabic. For instance, both tongues differentiated between the male and female individual when using the second person pronoun, while the Modern English retained only one grammar unit of the word ‘you’. When I pointed out that a wide array of structures would increase the expressive richness and flexibility of the language, Reham<sub>TT</sub> disagreed, saying that *Fus’ha* was hard for having “too many words.”

Kuwaiti reading habits have also changed such that many respondents preferred to read English-medium books to ones written in *Fus’ha*. Most participants viewed the classical written sources as dull and irrelevant to their modern context. According to Dalal<sub>TT</sub>, the Arabic literature was “readable, but it’s not that valuable now.” It seems that students of English departments were exposed to the masterpieces of Shakespeare or Jane Austen as part of their obligatory programmes, and were attracted to contemporary Anglophone cinematography’s characteristic “Aha!” moments – “something you can’t really express” As May<sub>TT</sub> put it. None of the respondents referred to experiencing these kinds of emotions when speaking about Arabic literature, and the problem will be addressed in the discussion section. They did, however, mention that

they would continue to read the daily newspapers in Arabic and enjoyed reading local magazines in Arabic as well.

One of the most important reasons cited for Standard Arabic becoming unpopular was the way it was presented in the national education system. Similar to the case of English, methodologies of Arabic language delivery relied basically on drilling and blind obedience to the teacher. Sara<sub>TT</sub> recalled her school teacher of Arabic being authoritarian and dominating. Her rigidity was manifested through constant prohibitions addressed to the class. “With Arabic, you find yourself sitting stuck in your chair, staring at the board” she remembered. She went on to share her pitiful reminiscences in regards to Arabic lessons having continuous requirements for conformity and uniformity, which eventually influenced her preference for the foreign tongue. It seems that if the teaching of Arabic continues to function on outdated methods and is not reinvented to suit 21<sup>st</sup> century education models and trends, this will be a catalyst for more and more students from the new generation feeling alienated from Arabic, hence reducing its importance ever more.

It is worth mentioning here that the goals of many young Kuwaitis of today to speak English reach far beyond easy talk about fashion or the latest news of technology or pop culture. This was suggested in many of the participants’ accounts, and in particular by Abeer<sub>TT</sub> who firmly explained her inclination to manage foreigners’ opinions about the Islamic and Arab world.

English, though it was the “the language of the enemy,” ironically became the single available, all-purpose means to overturn many myths and prejudices concerning Arabs that dominated in the modern multilingual community. The idea of learning the language of those who outperformed you in power in order not to lose the ideological battle was a popular motive in foreign language learning. In the perceptions of trainee teachers, the “enemy” was not any particular nation, but rather ignorance and

intolerance toward Kuwaitis exhibited by other cultures and people. However, Anglophone nations were perceived as more influential than others, and those implications and their relationship to the concepts of appropriation and resistance will be discussed in the corresponding sections.

### **Theme I – 6: Projected Futures for English and Arabic: Is There a Balance?**

The issues pertaining to the imbalance between Arabic and English in education, and the modes in which the two tongues were observed co-functioning in the lives of research participants (code-switching and translation), were discussed in an attempt to project the future of the two languages in Kuwait.

Two questionnaire items defined the horns of this dilemma: item 22, whether it was more important to learn English than Standard Arabic (*Fus 'ha*), and item 29, whether it was preferable to speak Kuwaiti Arabic rather than English. In response to the former question, almost 38% agreed with preferring EFL to the native language, while 43% rejected the idea. The difference between the two groups was rather insignificant, which suggested that *Fus 'ha* had weak positions in the multilingual context. Kuwaiti Arabic could boast a firmer status: 36% put it above English in terms of daily importance, while 25% were of the contrary opinion so that the gap between the two poles constituted 11%.

Comparing the state of affairs in private versus government schools in regards to ELT, Rahsa<sub>TT</sub> described a tough reality of the education system in Kuwait. On the one hand, public establishments delivered all subjects in Arabic, neglecting the EFL part of curricula so that graduates were poorly prepared to study at colleges and universities where the core content was taught in English. On the other hand, private-school pupils received insufficient instruction in Arabic so that they were unable to function efficiently in their native socio-linguistic environment.

The majority of participants observed no balance between Standard Arabic and English in Kuwait's educational establishments. Both Bedoor<sub>TT</sub> and Sulla<sub>TT</sub> confessed with feelings that they failed to use appropriate Arabic structures even when trying to pass their Arabic language examinations at college. Dalal<sub>TT</sub> revealed that she became so weak in the mother tongue that she used a translator during some formal conversations.

When acknowledging the decreasing level in Arabic language literacy, most respondents expressed guilt and remorse. They named various reasons for the necessity to mediate the problem of misbalance between English and Arabic such as the desire to "save Arabic from dying," feeling sorry for Arabic, the shame of "humiliating Arabic," and making it "nothing." Most respondents reprimanded themselves for not having enough practice in *Fus'ha* but, despite disapproval, they were not going to give up English, and would instead suggest a utopian bilingual mode.

Taking into account the above-mentioned views, trainee teachers projected negative expectations for the role of Arabic in Kuwait within the coming decades. They hypothesized that more and more people would start speaking English, even in family contexts. Language would become a signifier, differentiating individuals in terms of a type of intellectual prestige rather than prestige from wealth or social background. Intellectuals would choose English, while the mass public would keep to *Amia* (Kuwaiti Arabic), and both would reduce the applicability of *Fus'ha* to the bare minimum.

Upon digesting their views, I proceeded with the most eager participants to talk about remedial measures. They stressed that neither the Kuwait Ministry of Education or anybody else could impose a pro-Arabic regime unless people were eager to accept it in their minds and hearts. They became so interested in the problem that they started to discuss it with friends and college tutors outside our interview sessions. Participants in this discussion relayed to me the following conclusion: the role of Arabic would become restricted to it being the language of the Qu'ran. Representatives of upcoming

generations would prefer bilingual communication in English and *Amia*, and it will be left for us to predict how both languages would affect each other in terms of literacy and grammar standards. We concluded this debate with the decision that a complex ideological campaign would be needed to clarify the importance of the mother tongue and promote balanced (in terms of linguistic preferences) learning.

For projections regarding the development of English in Kuwait, a clue was provided in the questionnaires. Nearly 90% of respondents agreed with the assumption that more and more Kuwaitis would want to learn English in the years to come. Ghada<sub>TT</sub> emotionally acknowledged:

[T]hey will focus on English [in schools]. They are focusing [on it] now. Our children are talking easy English. There are no difficulties because they watch TV all the time. All the programmes are in English, and all the technology is in English, like computers and mobile [telephones]. They know everything about how to deal with this language.

According to Bedoor<sub>TT</sub>, the negative side of the advancement of English would be deterioration in Kuwaitis' knowledge of Standard Arabic. However, she didn't seem to be displeased with that by-product, stating that "there is a need to move on."

Contrary to the majority of views on this topic, a few trainee teachers had varied opinions, expressing that there would be no expansion of English within the coming decades. Sama<sub>TT</sub> mentioned that, despite new ELT institutions being opened in the country, fewer people have been attending:

I don't think there is a future [for English in Kuwait]. People don't like English so much now. You may find 10% who are interested in learning it abroad or even in Kuwait. They have opened a lot of institutions, but you find less people go and register there.

She stated that the market was overcrowded and it seemed that the relatively small demand for ELT educational services was supplied for years to come. Noor<sub>TT</sub> supposed that there would be changes in the functionality of English: its importance as a means of intellectual activities would diminish, while the utilitarian applications (such as shopping, travelling, and so on) would flourish:

I think there will be more English, but they won't use it properly. That's what I think. I think some people think English isn't a language. It's an action. They use English...for clothes and things.

Although this opinion represented the minority, these insights were worthwhile and could lead to painting a completely different, anti-expansion scenario for the future of English in Kuwait.

Projecting the future of English in Kuwait, student-teachers acknowledged an interesting phenomenon: Many Kuwaitis incorporated English words into their Arabic-medium discourses, depending on the context and goal of communication (code-switching). Both trainee teachers and lecturers code-switched in their home and professional environments (see theme 2: Contexts of using English vs. Arabic).

The phenomenon was often observed among the local youngsters who found it stylish and cool. Even if someone lacked proper knowledge of English, he or she would say "Okay," "See you later!" and "Love you!" More personal or sincere conversations were more likely to take place in Arabic. Wafa<sub>L</sub> said that, while she held class exclusively in English, she tolerated Arabic when talking with her students about personally sensitive issues: "If they want to express it more deeply, it's more comfortable for them to talk about it in their native language." College and university lecturers' code-switched during the board meetings, since it was more convenient to discuss pedagogical affairs in English and personal matters in Arabic. Although the

phenomenon was considered to be inappropriate in terms of genuine literacy, many people synthesised the two tongues for the sake of convenience.

Translation was a very important activity for trainee teachers. They had to read professional literature and did not yet possess the required level of English to fully understand it themselves or explain it to students. In cases where books were available in both languages – English and Arabic – participants used the English text in the first place and checked with the Arab text in case they failed to understand the general meaning. Although translation was viewed as an important aid in learning, many did not trust translations.

To summarise, both survey and interview data provided pessimistic models of the future relationship between Arabic and English. Judging from the testimonials of everyday use in regard to each tongue, the younger generation of Kuwaitis would tend to rely more heavily on English in almost every realm of social life excluding religious affairs, and, in some cases, family relationships. On the other hand, the knowledge of *Fus'ha* would decrease in comparison to both the local dialect of *Amia* and English. Those who used English in their profession readily gave up the mother tongue for the sake of academic achievement. The most common methods of synthesising English and Arabic became code-switching and translation. It was considered a new promising research direction to clarify the viewpoints of trainee teachers regarding the preferred futures for English and Arabic in Kuwait's education system.

### **Topic I Discussion: Many 'faces' of English in Kuwait**

The functions of English in Kuwait as identified in a course of in-depth interviews with participants extend beyond Kachru's (1990) classical categorisation of purposes pertaining to English language in non-anglophone contexts. To remind, Kachru's categorisation includes the *regulative* function (utilisation of language for governmental, legal, or administrative goals), the *instrumental* function (utilisation of

language in public and private educational environments), the *interpersonal* function (utilisation of language within families or any other social collectives), and the *imaginative/innovative* function (handling of language in creative activities or literature). From this perspective, the specifics of my research would have addressed only the *instrumental* and somehow *interpersonal* functional modalities, while the actual responses elicited from participants have revealed perceptions and attitudes that would fit the broader taxonomy developed by Phillipson (2009a). Phillipson has defined the English language that is operating outside the inner circle as *lingua economica* (the tool of global corporations), *lingua cultura* (language as a tool of teaching specific cultural concepts), *lingua academica* (a vehicle of communication in higher education establishments worldwide), *lingua emotiva* (a tool of the Anglophone mass culture or media), *lingua bellica* (the vehicle of military expansion), and *lingua frankensteinia* (a tool of global Americanisation and Europeanisation). All of these conceptualisations of English have been explicitly or implicitly mentioned by my confidants in the course of this study.

Despite my substantial reliance on Phillipson's classification (2009a), I dared not to too rigidly link my findings to the above-mentioned functions for the following reasons. The interpretive, constructionist lens with the elements of criticality that was utilised in the present investigation suggested monitoring participants' viewpoints concerning the status of English in Kuwait, and the state of teacher professional education given recent breakthroughs in TESOL. I did not intend to devise any evaluative matrix to organise those conceptualisations in a formal way in accordance with any existing categorisations. I approached the content of discourses as flexible, still-under-construction pieces of informants' mental activity. The goal was not to relate the responses to the predefined system of values/ratings but rather to hear the original, genuinely personal voices reflecting participants' everyday lives, which are above or



beyond any frames due to their dynamicity and complexity.

To illustrate the point, some trainee teachers have mentioned their perception of English as a marker of prestige that contributes to the firmament of new elites and new socioeconomic hierarchies. They speculate that, due to the expansion of global markets and the high presence of foreign-capital companies in Kuwait, the most well-paid business positions require English language skills. They believe that graduates of private English-medium schools have higher command of the foreign tongue. Therefore, those parents wishing to increase the chances of their children being more successful in life do their best to place them in educational establishments with an extensive English language learning curriculum. Given the high demand for their services, those institutions increase tuition payments and restrict the level of applicants' entry. In other words, not every Kuwaiti family can send its children to an Anglophone private school. Naturally, the matter of one's school placement becomes a distinctive feature guaranteeing higher social status. An individual's access to the English language is therefore preconditioned by an array of economic factors, such as parents' earnings, which, in turn, contributes to the shaping of the local socioeconomic environment. These complex conditions are not entirely covered by Phillipson's system.

On the one hand, the very connotation of 'prestigious English' is addressed when discussing English as a learning tool in the local educational context, and therefore pertains to the realm of *lingua academica*. On the other hand, research participants distinctively analyse English as *lingua economica*, since they discuss access to English-medium learning resources as a factor predicted by families' wealth and higher standards of living. Moreover, English is strongly associated with better job placements and educational opportunities in the contemporary global market. Finally, the implication of English becoming a *lingua cultura* relates to the 'prestige' of English: Command of the language itself is made a signifier of the Anglophone culture and is put

in line with other intrusions of the Westernised idea of success, such as stylish clothing, expensive cars, luxurious mansions, and so on. The association between a language and the political or economic powers represented by it is not novel. The famous Arab scholar Abdulrahman Ibn Khaldun, who lived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, stated that “[t]he vanquished always seek to imitate their victors in their dress, insignia, belief, and other customs” (Ibn Khaldun, 1987, p. 53). The validity of this observation is revealed in the history of many dominant languages such as Arabic, Russian, French or Spanish. They enjoyed supremacy and prestige for long periods when political power was in the hands of native speakers of those tongues. The same social phenomenon can be seen now in the case of English and Arabic when the former is regarded as a medium of the dominant culture which is likely to be imitated by Arabs.

When analysing the research results, I found that the theory of resistant behaviours helped to unveil the hidden ‘faces’ of English observed by respondents in their daily lives. Among the three resistant patterns defined by Canagarajah (2006b), the research participants chose either the *transpositional* strategy (manifested mostly through code-switching) to synthetically negotiate the value of English within the Arabic-speaking sociocultural grid, or the *hybridization* model, whereby they consciously complied with the dominant centralized ideology of the target language and culture (English) with relatively modest integration of the source language (Arabic). The last pattern *Appropriation* where the individual voice of the “non-native” English speaker with respect to the local traditions is developed was not present in the case of the informants.

While searching for third-party references to help me describe and validate these findings, I wondered, to what extent are the individual discourses of some Kuwaiti future English teachers and their lecturers able to portray the reality of the situation in regards to the status of English and the state of local teacher training. I found an answer

in Pennycook (2007):

[W]hile an argument that we take English to be what people perceive it to be is probably unhelpful in terms of establishing claims to what English is, this may nevertheless provide some insights into the ways that English may be more usefully understood as a product of the will to certain goods and identities rather than as a linguistic system. (p. 95)

It is important also to keep in mind that the findings of this study regarding how English functions in the Kuwaiti educational context is derived from the perspectives of a relatively modest number of local TESOL trainee teachers and their lecturers. I would not dare to argue that their experiences and ideas regarding English provide an exhaustive and rationalist description of what English really is in the given state. Their conceptualisations rather reflect the complex process of English-language myth-making. Myth-making was described by Pennycook (2007) as people's search for justifications of phenomena. Following Pennycook (2007), I would interpret those "myths" constructed by research participants from the three following perspectives: First, many of the 'faces' of English described by my confidants are products of the social order and for that reason the *social constructivist* epistemology was chosen to treat each personalised viewpoint with equal significance in reconstruction of the critical entity, i.e., English in Kuwait. These ideas are supported also by Ramanathan and Morgan (2009), who have stressed that language practices and policies cannot be separated from the broader social context. Second, *historical constructionism* has allowed me to consider the potential impacts of past events, including the colonial project on the present status quo. In addition, Zakharia (2010) stressed that "[l]anguages serve as symbolic boundary markers, linking the members of a speech community to each other in the present and to their history" (p. 158). When examined, both the synchronic (things happening in the present) and diachronic (things that happened in the past and

continue producing effects on the present) planes of social realities affect the study context. Finally, the *discursive constructionist* perspective (Pennycook, 2007) made me consider the varying nature of this phenomenon depending on time and locality.

Those three frameworks have helped me to discuss the findings and link them to previous research on the phenomenon of English in Kuwait and other outer-circle countries. I would suggest looking for the roots of the attitudes identified in this research in the historical colonial and post-colonial development of the Gulf region. I would also regard those perceptions as resulting from the contact between the Arab-medium native and English-medium foreign cultures across time in various social realms including, and first of all, education, and within the general context of the global cosmopolitan society.

Taking the above-mentioned guiding matrix, I discuss the following conceptualisations of English:

1. English as a “modern” language: Implications of progress and advancement;
2. English as a “cool” language: Implications of trendiness and freedom;
3. English as a language of “prestige”: Emergence and sustainment of socioeconomic inequalities;
4. English as a language of the “enemy”: Issues of resistance and tolerance

### **Concept 1: English as a “modern” Language: Implications of Progress and Advancement**

The present connotation emerged when Manar<sub>TT</sub> lauded English for its scientific power and progressive nature. She provided the curious example of a girl in Britain who successfully underwent complex brain surgery. Upon describing the case, she exclaimed: “We have to learn from them in the English language.” In part, this attitude reflects a desire to gain the knowledge of the English-speaking world, and recognition that learning their language is a necessary precursor. In another part, it was the personal

perception of this trainee teacher and others that the English language possesses clear linguistic structure and logic to adequately convey sensitive knowledge and operate as a lingua franca in the realms of medicine, technology, and science, while Standard Arabic is too complicated to support dynamic professional conversations on specific, narrow-field topics; and Kuwaiti Arabic is too “unserious” as Alia<sub>TT</sub> put it. Here, a strong belief can be detected that needs to be discussed in greater depth – regarding the unequal potential of languages in terms of ‘scientific’ or ‘technological’ power.

When describing their attitudes toward English, many trainee teachers referred to it as “modern” and associated it with technological and scientific advancements, such as the Internet, neurosurgery, knowledge-intensive industrial production, and state-of-the-art research and development methods. On the surface, the direct association made by Kuwaitis between English and modernity or progress in the scientific and technological sense may be regarded as the logic of the socio-historical development process that took place in Kuwait.

Historically-speaking, in the 1930s, when the British- and American-driven oil-field development and subsequent economic advancement of Kuwait began, Kuwaitis got introduced to many artefacts of the oil business, such as oil-drilling rigs, equipment for transportation or weight-lifting, and contemporary household objects such as refrigerators and telephones through the medium of English. As Akbar (2007) noted, during that period, the Kuwaiti Arabic language assimilated multiple borrowed terms, such as the new Arabic words that denoted “radio” (/ra:du/), “air condition” (/kinderén/), “bus” (/ba:s/), and such. These three definitions as well as other ones have their equivalents in Standard Arabic which are present in the written documents, while in oral speech the transliterated versions are more commonly used. The trend can be explained by the perceived technological supremacy of the Anglophone states which makes speakers of the Arabic language preserve original English names for

technologies despite the efforts to translate those into Arabic. Nowadays, due to the quick tempo of technological advancement, it becomes increasingly difficult to translate multiple issues related to the Internet or cyberspace. By the time a translated version is approved and documented, the original English-language term for the invention would have been already well established and commonly used in everyday speech.

Anyhow, does the similarity of these new Arabic words to their English counterparts mean that those utensils were not up to that point described by Arabic because the local civilisation lacked such resources? Yes, partly this is true. Kaplan (2001) has stated that the spread of English as the universal scientific and technological code is predicted by the development of science and technology, which are structured according to the “English-based sociology of knowledge” (p. 12). Innovations are described in the language that is spoken by the innovation developers. Kuwait (as well as other Arab countries) was not in a position to compete with Anglophone countries in terms of technological advancement: too little research was conducted and too few new methods or techniques were developed and patented in Standard Arabic in comparison to the ones carried out in English. It is fair to note here that in Kuwait (as well as other countries like Egypt and Lebanon) sincere efforts are being made to promote creativity and scientific research as conducted in the Classical Arabic language. For example, in 1989 The Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Prize for Poetic Creativity was opened in Cairo, and in 2004 The Al-Babtain Translation Centre was launched. The former sets the task of reinforcing the status and value of Arab poetry, while the latter conducts various translation projects from foreign languages into Arabic and vice-versa. However, these efforts are not enough to fill in the gap concerning Arab scholarship.

On the deeper level of analysis one may see that the close association between English and modernity or progress is not the immediate outcome of “the coincidence of accidental forces” (Kaplan, 2001, p. 19) but rather the result of colonialist and

imperialist ideologies as appropriated and agreed upon by many generations of Kuwaitis. The very direction of linguistic borrowings (from English to Arabic) points at the misbalanced ethnocentric hierarchy: Non-Europeans were looked down on as inferior in terms of technology ownership, intellectual abilities or competencies, and knowledge depositaries. Westernisation of knowledge has happened not only in Kuwait but also in many other Middle Eastern or African countries involved in the colonial project. As Sbaiti (2010), Segalla (2010) and Zakharia (2010) have stated, the link between languages and modernity or progress became popularised in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Gulf region and some North African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia under the French and British protectorate governments who created and supported the misbalance of powers between the source and target languages in education systems. In the abovementioned countries all sciences, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, technology, engineering, medicine and such, were delivered through English or French as the only possible instructional medium. One of the few recent examples of the contrary trend is Syria which is called “the only Arab country in which the medium of instruction in higher education is Arabic” (Al-Wer, 2006, p. 1919). This state features a successful model of teaching sciences and medicine in Arabic.

In some of Kuwait’s tertiary educational establishments, as previously mentioned, students study science, medicine, and architecture in English, and all business colleges have English-medium curricula. The emergence of English as a lingua franca of science is legitimised by an array of political and economic factors (Martel, 2001), such as the amounts of money Anglophone countries spent on research and development as well as deployment of new methods. The scopes of such assets predict the ability of a state to take part in global policy-making in science and technology. The degree of advancement in these realms is judged not only based on monetary and

material expenses, but also on the number of reports and articles published in professional journals or collections on research topics funded. Since Anglophone countries hold larger budgets to support such activities in comparison to non-Anglophone ones, it is logical that English-medium discourses are more clearly heard in the international scientific discussion. Accordingly, non-Anglophone stakeholders of the technology-based worldwide community promote the Anglicisation of their local education systems in order to gain access to the rich treasury of professional knowledge that is constructed in the English language.

The findings of my research indicate that most of the participants' testimonies supported the above logic about why English is the *lingua franca*. There are empirical findings, however, which support the ambiguity of teaching sciences in English to Arab-speaking students. For example, Troudi (2009b) has commented on the continuous project that aims at exploring the viewpoints of UAE students pertaining to the status of English as a medium of instruction and a means to deliver scientific and academic content. In this research, 20 young males were interviewed about studying sciences in the foreign tongue. On the one hand, the research participants expressed enthusiasm toward English as a language of scientific progress and technological advancement. On the other hand, they acknowledged multiple problems that they face in their utilisation of English as a medium of instruction. Struggling through the syntactical and lexicological structures of Standard Academic English, those learners confess to the perception that they are sometimes missing the meaning of subjects.

The above-mentioned data indicate that the choice of English as a medium of instruction or a medium of research and development fails to predict the scope and tempo of the potential for economic prosperity or scientific and technological advancement in Arab states neither is it able to boost students' academic achievement. Those findings are supported by the claim of Troudi (2009b), who has warned that no



particular language can be associated with modernity in terms of progress. Thus, the English language is a tool to describe innovations and not to substitute them. Unfortunately, trainee teachers have acknowledged only what is lying on the surface. They understood that English is commonly used in the discourses related to science and technology. On that basis, they have concluded that English is the embodiment of scientific and technological advancement. The problems associated with this misperception will be analyzed in the second discussion section, which will address issues pertaining to English as a language of instruction in Kuwait and discuss the conditions of local teacher training.

### **Concept 2: English as a “cool” Language: Implications of Trendiness and Freedom**

This concept reveals the implications of coolness associated with English from participants’ perspectives. Terms like “cool”, “hip”, “up-to-date” and “fashionable” were very common in trainee teachers’ discourses. Such expressions pertain to the “trendiness” of the language, i.e., its ability to be in vogue or to convey up-to-date tendencies and realities that can be traced in the general mass-culture context – attributes that have influence in the desire of young Kuwaitis to learn it. Another important connotation of those two epithets is the one of freedom. As Fay<sub>TT</sub> has put it, “I secretly get the DVD of *Gossip Girl*, watching it makes me feel like I live in America, it’s so exciting and liberal. I know I can’t do this here, girls there are so free”. Bibi<sub>TT</sub> linked English with her freedom to study abroad “the only way I can convince my parents to let me travel is to show them that I am excellent in English and bring the best grades” she said. These examples show how English allows some Kuwaitis to disassociate themselves from the dominant central authority, to travel across geographic and ideological barriers as well as to fit into the worldwide community, while the native Arabic, by default, positions the individual into the traditional, conservative, and

separatist environment. It is also worth mentioning here that the issue of gender plays a major role. While women may use the foreign language as a way of expressing some kind of social resistance or rebellion against restrictive norms, men in the Arab World enjoy more social freedom and perhaps might not share the same motives in their choice to speak English.

In perhaps an even more powerful application, English can be an instrument of thought expression – English is the dominant language of the Internet, which is, among many other things, the premier mode of self-expression among young people the world over. Self-expression over the Internet, particularly in the use of blogs, circumvents the traditional censorship in community publications, such as the restrictions exercised in Kuwaiti newspapers. In this way, the language (English) is linked to the idea of freedom.

As Findlow (2005, 2006) has acknowledged, the polarity of the Anglophone and Arabic cultures in terms of flexibility, diversity, stylishness, and freedom has survived into the present day. This polarity persists, many years after the disappearance of the colonial regime from the Gulf countries, when the presence of “patronage and councils of hereditary sheikhs” or “conservative Islamic dress codes” (Findlow, 2005, p. 287) as characteristics of Arabic “traditionalism” first became minimised. Those students preparing themselves to become TESOL teachers in Kuwait – members of the generation that believes English to be “cool” and “hip” – were born in the late 1980s or early 1990s when Kuwait re-established itself in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion in 1990. During this time, Kuwaitis “tended to appreciate Westerners, particularly Americans, for extending their hands to help the people of the country to quell the Iraqi invasion” (Akbar, 2007, p. 32). Due to this appreciation, Kuwaitis were simultaneously drawn to English as a means of communication, privatisation, multipartite political order, suffragist movements, avant-garde art, and so on.

One should not overlook also the role of mass media in the firmament of the image of English as a “freer” or “cooler” language. A few of the trainee teachers recalled their positive childhood impressions from TV Channel 2, mentioned also by Wheeler (1998). It was one of the local channels, which, despite censorship, provided an access to the details of the worldwide Anglophone culture. In the present day, satellite television brings uncensored channels into Kuwaiti homes where American TV series are widely watched, providing a regular dosage of American culture. The American talk show, “Oprah,” for example, which airs daily on the most watched regional Arab satellite channel MBC, enjoys top ratings where it generates great interest. The same is true for MTV and other music channels, and international news stations. Add to this the alluring images of Hollywood, by which English serves as *lingua emotiva* (one trainee teacher has defined this function as conveying the “Aha” moments of revelation in Hollywood films). These impressions are due in part to present-day cultural experiences noted above, and in part are rooted in Kuwaiti history: The real-life, positive impressions of Western life gathered by Kuwaiti children who were taken abroad by their parents during the Iraqi invasion and came back as being partly “Coca-colonised,” as Phillipson (2009a) has put it.

To summarise, it is not a rare situation in the Arab world that the youth and even elder generations perceive foreign languages such as French and English as symbols of liberty, a sort of compensation in geographical and intellectual terms for a world they aspire to but cannot join because of political boundaries and restrictions. Given the absence or minimal degree of freedom granted to women and the increasing social pressure applied onto them (Brock and Demirdjian, 2010), a lot of young Arab females adopt English for the following reason:

For the women entering the degree programme, the chance to study at college for four years often offers a welcome change from domestic demands, and for

many, teaching is one of the few career options that is acceptable to their families. In this sense, English and English teaching play an empowering role in their lives. It also offers a potential avenue for contributing to local language policy and planning debates. (Clarke, 2007, p. 585)

My own research has also revealed that some Kuwaiti female residents who managed to enter higher-education establishments envisage English as unlocking internal and external state boundaries, and helping them to virtually or physically travel between countries and cultures. Almost every trainee teacher stressed the merit of knowing English in order to communicate with people from all over the world. I have concluded that, on the part of Arab women, English-medium professional instruction and the English language became powerful tools of self-construction and rebellion against social and political regulations (see also Akbar, 2007, and Mazawi, 2010).

What struck me most is the subconscious nature of the choice of English as a symbol of freedom on the part of respondents. It is understandable that the tongue may be the signifier of coolness and trendiness on the same basis that it stands for scientific and technological progress. As for reality underlying the communication of personal freedoms through the means of a foreign language, research participants were either unaware of those or preferred not to divulge them. Here one can observe the technique of hybridization, whereby non-Anglophone speakers adjust their indigenous context so that it would fit the major conventions of the standard academic English language culture. It is not, however, the strategy described by Canagarajah (2006b) in which English as a language of a former colonial oppression has changed its polar charge and has been transformed into the symbol of freedom. This intricacy is worth studying in order to be used when forming the future educational and general sociolinguistic policy in Kuwait, paying close attention to the balance between English and Arabic tongues.

### **Concept 3: English as a Language of “prestige”: Emergence and Sustainment of Socioeconomic Inequalities**

Ideas shared by many trainee teachers show that, alongside the conceptualisation of English as “modern”, “cool” and “free”, there come perceptions of this language as contributing to the emergence of a new elite class depending on one's access to English-medium educational resources. This viewpoint coincides with the perspective of Tollefson (2000) who has stated:

At a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities. (p. 8)

According to my confidants, a Kuwaiti with a command of English is regarded as better educated and having more prestige or value in society. This perception is in full agreement with academic literature studying language as a source and instrument of oppression and imbalance.

That the English language cannot operate as a neutral phenomenon where each agent has equal access to associated resources is not a completely new finding. In regard to the situation in Kuwait, the roots of the trend should again be looked for in the political history of the Gulf region. The colonial educational policy in Kuwait, similar, for example, to the one in Lebanon (Sbaiti, 2010; Zakharia, 2010), promoted the idea of learning a foreign language as a medium of ‘progress.’ English-medium schools are regarded as more ‘advanced’ and promising better opportunities whereby graduates are better prepared for surviving in the modern world with its rapid technological advancements and consumerist economic models. English is viewed as one of the “markers of economic potential and social achievement” (Bruthiaux, 2002, p. 291); a symbol of prestige and higher status (Findlow, 2006).

Amidst wide public discussion of opportunities related to the firmament of a

knowledgeable society in the Gulf countries and the reformation of the local education systems (Bindé, 2005), experts continue to stress that local monolingual Arab-medium educational frameworks fail to prepare graduates to function successfully in contemporary society. Almost half a century after the removal of the British protectorate, Kuwaitis still perceive English-medium educational establishments as ensuring more beneficial placements of graduates in academic and professional roles. Analogical perceptions can be found across other Arab countries (see literature review).

As Bruthiaux (2002) stated, “the consumers of English language education are relatively well-off, and already far beyond the stage of mere survival” (p. 290). In other words, many of those non-Anglophones who have access to English-medium education outside the inner belt are more privileged in comparison to their less ‘lucky’ countrymen in terms of well-being. The specific nature of English in the Kuwaiti context (similar to the case of Israel – see Ben-Rafael, 2000; Ezra, 2007) is sometimes described by participants as a pretext to “show off” when parents boast of placing their children in English-medium schools or local youths start speaking English in public instead of Arabic to demonstrate their command of the foreign tongue.

Researchers describe the situation in Kuwait concerning limited access to high-quality education as “a membership into an exclusive club” (Kazmi, 1997, p. 8; see also Davies, 2003) or an “assumptions nexus” (Ramanathan, 2005, p. 37) – terms that relate to any social and ideological hierarchy with disproportional exchange of various assets between ‘privileged’ and ‘unprivileged’ groups. Phillipson (2009a) commented on the phenomenon as follows: “[The] choice as to whether people should learn English is a luxury that the world’s have-nots do not enjoy, unlike postcolonial elites” (p. 337). In the case of Kuwait, where entrance examinations to the most ‘prestigious’ faculties at respected colleges and universities are taken in English, achievement in EFL becomes a privilege and a mechanism to diversify the local society into those who enjoy better

academic and employment opportunities through English and those who are denied such social and economic benefits.

When commenting on the implications of ‘prestige’ in regard to English, trainee teachers treated perceived ‘exclusivity’ as snobbishness demonstrated by some Kuwaitis. However, the real problem should be discussed on a deeper level. Who should be made responsible for the imbalance of benefits associated with speaking English? The status value of English in Kuwaiti educational settings is constructed by those who accept and take it for granted. As Zakharia (2010) has observed, this is a vicious circle: the more people believe in the ‘exclusivity’ of English, the higher are the standards imposed on the local education system which has to respond to such requirements. While a substantial group of Kuwaitis who have not graduated from private schools or failed to study at English language centres are made invisible under this perspective, the trainee teachers and their lecturers who participated in the my research feel that they are already ‘in the club’ and therefore are not likely to rebel against the status quo. Instead they have to solve multiple problems associated with the identification of English language learners from the outer circle in terms of applicable standards and role models. These critical issues will be addressed in the second part of this chapter.

#### **Concept 4: English as a Language of the ‘enemy’ and Arabic as a Language of ‘identity formation’: Resistance or Mimicry?**

During the interview sessions, there were several times when trainee teachers referred to English as "the language of the enemy." As Pavlenko (2003) noted, feelings of alienation and resistance of representatives of a particular nation towards a non-native language can be the consequence of historical events, for example military operations. Colonizers are regarded by the locals as aggressors depriving indigenous people of their rights and freedom, including those pertaining to language and culture (Phillipson, 1992). The situation in Kuwait, however, demands additional

considerations due to its particular colonial past.

Discourse referring to “language of the enemy” does not necessarily imply actual warfare between the states or any other immediate forms of oppression. Upon gaining independence, Kuwait has never fought with the UK, the U.S. or any other member of the international commonwealth, and attitudes towards Anglophone cultures have always been highly positive. Nevertheless, in 2003, Kuwait became a transition corridor for the U.S. and British troops who marched into Iraq to fight against terrorism and the regime of Saddam Hussein. During this time, Kuwaitis became split into two camps, one of which considered the invasion of the neighbouring country an attempt to deploy the democratic model of governance in the region, while others criticised the U.S. for applying “double standards of justice” (Akbar, 2007, p. 32) to the political agents according to the degree of their conformity to the American norm or providing secret support to Israelis in their fight against Palestinians.

One should not be surprised at the emergence of resistant attitudes towards the Anglophone culture and the English language among Kuwaitis, although no military aggression took place against them on the part of Inner-circle states. As Fairclough (2006) has explained, the trading of meanings and values ascribed to a specific language or culture occurs not only through the instruments of “hard power”, that is, the wide-scale implementation of economic and military resources to stimulate conformity, but also as part of the “soft power” strategy, i.e., the ability to affect mass or personal opinion in favour of any particular idea. This goal is commonly achieved through discourse, the potential of which was explained by Foucault (1984): “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (1984, p. 110). The role of language under such circumstances cannot be simplified to that of the tool to codify ideational units. Discourse is able to convey and support



ideologies, thus becoming an important element of cultural and economic politics.

Resistance to the formerly colonial languages and associated discourses may take several forms, as observed across the Middle East; however, the most recent strategies suggest a desire for the construction of a peaceful dialogue between the West and the East instead of one of aggression and hostility. When Findlow (2006) analyzed 500 questionnaires and the scripts of 65 interviews/correspondences which involved UAE students, teachers, and educational administrators taken between 1971 and 2000, she noted the presence of resistant behaviours towards Western impacts. The trend could be explained by the desire of young people to safeguard their national traditions, inextricable from the Arabic language, which would function not only as a *lingua sacra* (see also Zakharia, 2010) but also as a means to oppose the aggressive pro-Western modernisation and English as “tool[s] of symbolic violence” (Findlow, 2006, p. 20). The epithet ‘symbolic’ means that the conflict between the source and target languages/cultures is observed on the ideological plane. When the participants of Findlow’s research call for elevation of the status of Arabic and the development of local knowledge models, they suggest taking civilised actions and criticise methods of conducting armed conflict employed by the radical proponents of the anti-globalist ideology.

Hovsepian (2010) described the large-scale project that has been recently deployed in Palestine to create the national identity through reformation of local curricula. Learning materials have been remolded to concentrate on state-building rather than on resistance. Given the attempts to position an Arab Palestinian identity as being “open to universal influences” (Hovsepian, 2010, p. 132), the new programmes are promoting the idea of studying foreign tongues (primarily English) to communicate with the world. The reform is being conducted first of all on the level of terminology. The textbooks feature words denoting conflict resolution and negotiation instead of

those pertaining to resistance and armed opposition.

To provide another example, Zakharia (2010) has investigated the sociopolitical implications of similar educational programmes in Lebanon through various field-research methods between 2005 and 2007, within a population of 1,000 secondary-school stakeholders. Zakharia has acknowledged that the current Lebanese language policy provides important cues for understanding the contested beliefs and assumptions of local youths in an age of challenging, multidirectional claims of state construction, as integrated in the global context as well as in religious and sectarian contexts. The official discourses tackled the tripartite educational system, which promotes bilingualism in Arabic and one foreign language (English or French). In the study, trainee teachers revealed that the role of English cannot be diminished to just a tool of accessing better education or employment. Young Lebanese are aware of the tongue's ideological functions and make this awareness clear through emphasising that English is the language of the most powerful states, and they should learn it in order to reassure and dispel concerns of members of the international family who are troubled about the imagined 'threat' coming from the Muslim, Arab-speaking East.

In a similar fashion, the participants of my study highlight the necessity to raise the feeling of belonging to one's mother country and tongue among Kuwaiti nationals. Sara<sub>TT</sub>, who called for reviving the respect to and awareness of the Arab language saying "we have to have a belonging to our language," clearly meant that the new generation wanted to resolve conflict between English and Arabic cultures through language and show the better side of the Arab people. It is worth noting here that disproportional delegation of powers through English-medium discourses is manifested also on the international arena, where the public fail to differentiate between terrorists and Arab Muslims who live in Iraq or other Middle-Eastern countries. As Gena<sub>TT</sub> noted, "they see all of us as terrorists." Perpetuating this outer misconception of Arabs, many

participants called for initiating resistant efforts to show the authentic, true-to-life image of the Arab world and oppose the prevailing stereotypes.

Overall, participants have demonstrated critical attitudes and perceptions in regard to English-medium influences that are shaped by political and economic powers of the Anglophone states. A few have approached the theme under discussion by recalling how their parents advised them to learn English in order to talk with the ‘enemy’ in the same tongue. These experiences show that the elders clearly put a demarcation line between the Arab ‘We’ and the Anglophone ‘Other’. These trainee teachers, however, are less concerned about explicit aggression from the West than their parents, and more concerned with anti-Arab discourses which isolate them from the global family. Fay<sub>TT</sub> expressed the following English learning agenda: “[W]e are not mujahedeen and such. No. I’ll teach them how to smile to all people, understand and respect.” The young Kuwaitis in this study who are making the first steps in their professional teaching life do not wish to put up with the hostility of ‘powerful’ English or ‘bellicose’ Arab, and choose to operate the tongues in a way that will transmit friendly messages internationally. They tend to envision English as a tool to melt the general prejudice against residents of the Gulf region as being menacing to international stability and sustainability.

Abeer<sub>TT</sub> lamented that the worldwide community sees Arabs as evildoers. She voiced her motivation for learning English:

When we travel abroad, we’re really proud that we’re Arab. Because of the kinds of looks [people give us], we need to explain ourselves. We’re good people. Why would they look at us that way?

I must add here that participants’ reflections over English as the language of the ‘enemy’ have revealed an interesting perspective in regard to Arabic. The trainee teachers in this study have demonstrated a loose commitment towards the maintenance

of Standard Arabic. When asked about the degrading status of the mother tongue, the confidants have agreed upon the necessity to practice it more, although few of them would consider doing so in their own private and professional environments.

Remembering the motivation of trainee teachers to study English for the sake of addressing the Anglophone world, I could not but ask myself what messages are they going to send to the world? Yahya Talib, Kuwaiti writer and comparative literature scholar states:

People fail in their Arabic courses and can still graduate from school with diplomas. So you end up having high school graduates who study English literature and become scholars afterwards, and they go abroad representing, mind you, Kuwait and the Arab world. When they go to the U.S. or to Europe for grad school, they are considered Arab students. But when asked by scholars abroad, do they know how to speak about their own culture? Would they answer a simple question as: ‘Name three novelists from the Arab world’? I must say this is a real shame. Not only do these people misrepresent literature in the Arab world, but they add up to the stereotype of us. (Al-Qatari, 2008)

Given this lamentable trend and the fact that many trainee teachers demonstrated strong emotional attachment to the foreign tongue, I would agree with previous findings concerning the crisis of Arabic (Al-Qatari, 2008; Asfoor, 2008), and hypothesise that the majority of trainee teacher participants have chosen “an uncritical colonization” (Clarke, 2007, p. 587) by English instead of “cultural equivalencing,” defined by Lim (1991) as a “systematic promotion of the local culture in an English language teaching programme [...] with the aim of putting it on the same level of significance as western culture” (p. 66, qtd. in Clarke, 2007, p. 585). While acknowledging critical implications of English as a tool of unbalanced power negotiation, my interviewees have demonstrated a lack of resources to mediate the problem in order to decrease the level

of their individual disempowerment and invisibility, preferring instead the strategies of immersion and even mimicry (here we may again refer to Ibn Khaldun) into the Anglophone culture.

## **Topic II Analysis: Professional ELT Preparation from the GE Perspective**

The six themes delineated here pertain to the second research question which addresses implications of current views of English for teacher preparation. The topics were identified through communication with participants regarding their personal views and experiences. Lecturers' opinions were relevant to the scope of my investigation, not as a separate research question, but to provide supporting evidence to trainee teachers' discourses and an additional point of view for determining and explaining how the GE debate impact the professional training of the country's teaching cadres.

In choosing the themes under Topic II, I focused on the concept of knowledge base as the essential foundation of any teacher's awareness, and thus an important goal of teacher preparation. To remind, the teaching profession implies the following types of knowledge: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and critical knowledge (see Literature Review for details). The themes under Topic II are grouped accordingly. Theme one addresses participants' opinions concerning the types of knowledge essential for any TESOL teacher. Themes two, three, and four describe teacher-training programmes from the GE perspective, and thus refer to subject matter content knowledge. Theme five addresses pedagogical and curricular knowledge, and theme six explores critical knowledge.

### **Theme II – 1: What Should an English Teacher be Like – Different Perspectives**

In constructing the present theme I aimed to uncover and compare the assumptions and beliefs of non-practicing novice teachers with that of established

lecturers, in regard to the skills and characteristics that, from their perspectives, an English language teacher should possess. Student teachers shared ideas about model teaching and expectations they had of the instructional context they were preparing to work in. Trainee teachers' views were supported by lecturers' explanation of the objectives behind specific teacher training curricula. The total set of participants' conceptualisations helps to understand what an English language teacher should be like in order to communicate the key messages pertaining to GE. By constructing the idealised image of an English language teaching professional, my respondents would be able to identify the skills or types of knowledge they are lacking themselves. Upon comparing the targeted model of an ideal teacher and their own challenging realities, participants would also be able to understand how well their academic curricula prepare them for operating in the GE environment.

Evidently all research participants, whether they were practicing lecturers or trainee teachers, held some general concept of the profession of teaching and adjusted it according to their current needs and environments. Established professionals (i.e., lecturers) tended to place greater emphasis on knowledge base, while less sophisticated informants (i.e., trainee teachers) lacked terminology to define the issue of professionalism in teaching and employed emotive descriptors rather than established standard definitions. Ideas pertaining to the issue of teachers' professionalism emerged in respondents' discourses not as a monolith bulk but rather as a multi-element ideational framework that comprised the following. Student teachers as lacking enough experience in the teaching field-work described professionalism through references to model teacher as a self-precious phenomenon or integrated to the context of a perfect-fit educational establishment. Lecturers provided a more sophisticated angle of view on the phenomenon reflecting over teacher knowledge base and the extent it was implemented to the programmes. It is worth mentioning that when asking lecturers about the scope of

knowledge essential for teachers I used the term “knowledge base,” while the applicable information from trainee teachers was elicited indirectly without actually employing any specific terminology so that the question sounded like “What should a teacher be like?” or “What qualities should a teacher possess?” The result of linking the two perspectives on professionalism as viewed by participants is provided below.

Lecturers provided answers to the question concerning teacher knowledge base relying on the specifics of their courses but, despite any personal biases, all participants of that category identified the following core types of knowledge: knowledge of language (content knowledge), repertoire of pedagogical skills (pedagogical content knowledge) and awareness of techniques required to manage classrooms and deliver subject matter (curricular knowledge).

It was clear that language was at the centre of the professional knowledge domain from lecturers’ (and as the further analysis will show, trainee teachers’) perspective. As Farah<sub>L</sub> suggested, “They should be aware of the language itself, in terms of the spoken language as well as other skills. Equally important is the linguistic and literary part of the language.” Anwar<sub>L</sub> claimed that a good training programme should “focus not only on the theoretical part of the programme, but equally on the practical side.” Taking this definition a step further, Suad<sub>L</sub> described an adequate knowledge base to include the following:

The teacher should be aware of the language and the components of the language-phonetics, morphology, syntax, and grammar. Besides that, they should be aware of the Kuwaiti education system and the needs of the students in the Kuwaiti primary stage. We are preparing teachers to be primary stage teachers.

According to lecturer respondents, mastery in oral speech was typically present in the courses of second language acquisition and any form of English language preparation

programmes trainee teachers have had in the past. As such, it was assumed that trainee teachers have already been sufficiently introduced to English and needed only to enrich their experiences in order to perform an array of professional skills and particular job-related assignments.

The agenda of TESOL education required of its specialists a clear understanding of purposes and functions of English in the learning context, and was fulfilled through the delivery of courses such as Applied Linguistics and appropriate sub-courses including The History of the English Language, The Study of Language, or Error Analysis and similar subjects. From the very beginning of the programme trainee teachers were engaged in the above-mentioned subject-specific courses, supposing that they were able to cope with intensive knowledge scaffolding conducted in the foreign language. However, without any grammar or remedial courses for those who might not be able to catch up (such a group makes up a substantial part of the new trainee teachers), the direct involvement into the English-medium specific subject-matter led to frustration and poor academic achievement (will be demonstrated below).

English as an instrument of academic communication in the written mode was manifested in a set of literature courses. These course included drama, poetry and fiction. On the one hand, Khalid<sub>L</sub> confessed that they would like to avoid concentrating solely on British literature in order to communicate the richness of American, Australian, or Canadian literary heritage. On the other hand, there were also voices raised against going deeper into literary textbook studies. As Jude<sub>L</sub> said, the training of English language teachers should focus more on applied linguistics together with sub-disciplines and present literature as a general idea. Despite dissimilar attitudes towards the literary element of language knowledge all lecturers agreed that it should be presented in the curriculum on a regular basis.

Furthermore, lecturers considered knowledge pertaining to relationships between



the language and the culture of the target language equally important for moulding the awareness of the structural and applied linguistic elements in prospective teachers. However, due to gaps in academic curricular, a substantial proportion of trainee teachers missed that important agenda. As it will be mentioned under the theme covering the issues of language culture in teachers' education, at KU trainee teachers lacked access to any cultural communication activities. As for CBE, although its programme featured the culture-learning course, trainee teachers took part in it on an elective basis, and therefore the wider-scale introduction of cultural issues to all trainee teachers was not guaranteed.

To explore further lecturers' conceptualisations of the teacher knowledge base, Khalid<sub>L</sub> stressed that the main objective of professional TESOL programmes was "teaching the students to teach". He stressed the idea that trainee teachers should be consistently exposed to both theory and practice. Teacher training, curriculum development, and testing were argued to be included and interrelated within this course framework. In general most all lecturers acknowledged that at least on the theoretical level, the disciplines pertaining to the learning process – pedagogy, psychology and methodology – were already present in the academic curriculum.

At the next stage of data processing, I wanted to compare those lecturers' reactions with the viewpoints observed in the population of trainee teachers. Analysis of in-depth interviews demonstrated that supervisees fully agreed with their supervisors concerning the value of all three types of knowledge mentioned in the beginning of the sub-section: language knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Student teachers acknowledged that language and pedagogical content as well as curriculum contributed to the firmament of educators' traditional knowledge base but lamented over the huge gaps existing between relevant theories and practices.

Student teachers commonly stressed the linguistic abilities of a teacher. They

expressed a high degree of responsibility in regard to increasing their own proficiency in grammar and pronunciation in preparation of becoming teachers. It became evident that the most seriously minded trainee teachers kept refining their skills in order to present the subject in front of children in the best possible way in terms of wording, accent, and proper use of language structures. They confessed that they were ready to practice their English not only during lectures but also in their own families or with friends. They also tried to read professional literature, surf the Internet, and follow popular English television programmes. Although the importance of oral speech was not doubted by learners, it was interesting that little attention was given to gaining proficiency in written academic English.

Furthermore, few trainee teachers mentioned the value of knowledge related to applied linguistics or the history of the language. The trend showed that they were not interested in enriching their theoretical knowledge repertory being concentrated rather on practical matters. The same tendency was observed in regard to subjects pertaining to literature and culture. The majority disregarded the contribution of those subject areas to the realm of TESOL. To specify, many could not understand the reason for studying English-medium literature or poetry. I am afraid that they did not want to conceive the goal of literary analysis as part of a course dedicated to Anglophone literary heritage. Halla<sub>TT</sub> lamented: “We’re given so much literature. We don’t need Shakespeare. Why?” Laila<sub>TT</sub> reported: “Drama and literature are a little bit difficult. Maybe that depends on the teacher and how she presents the subject.” An either neutral or rejecting attitude towards literature studies was common among trainee teachers, indicating that the relevance of these subjects was not fully understood.

Besides oral English, trainee teachers put psychological or methodological skills to the foreground of their profession. In this sense, they completely agreed with the model proposed by Jude<sub>L</sub>:

If you are asked a question, you shouldn't be hesitant. You should be knowledgeable, articulate and tactful. If you don't know the answer, you should know how to deal with your students.

Of course, it would depend on the specifics of a teacher's personality, amount of experience, intellectual abilities, and behavioural patterns whether (s)he was able to comply with this standard. Unfortunately, as participants indicated, the existing educational system provided a challenging environment for such aspirations to be brought to fruition. Among inhibiting factors trainee teachers named outdated textbooks, rigidity of teaching approaches, unsatisfactory assistance provided to the beginning teachers by school administration, and scarcity of technological resources such as multimedia devices and computer-assisted learning materials. As the quote above demonstrates, not only should an ideal educator possess the corpus of relevant knowledge but also demonstrate methodological competence and an ethical attitude towards pupils. While interviews showed that participants were aware of those requirements, their reactions provided valuable insights on the factors that hindered their potential in comparison to the envisaged model of teacher professionalism.

When constructing the abovementioned framework, a substantial proportion of trainee teachers did not hesitate to name the native English speaker a model teacher out of respect of his/her native language abilities. All school related materials including textbooks and audio media were based on the Anglophone model of the Inner Circle. Hence, it is no surprise that trainee teachers considered themselves less competent when compared to British or American citizens. They lauded teachers from the UK for having greater accuracy, higher style, more demanding treatment of accents and elegance; while other trainee teachers praised teachers from the U.S. for democracy, greater social flexibility, and lesser grammatical stringency. TESOL educators from the Arabic belt as well as from the countries of the outer and expanding circles were regarded as low-level

professionals because of their accents and the fact of not being native English speakers. Referring to non-Anglophone teachers working in Kuwait, Ghada<sub>TT</sub> stated: “Their accent is not good. Americans and the English are better in accent. Indians and Egyptians don’t say [all of] the letters and their accent is wrong.” This rejection of varieties and accents in the local educational context portrays Kuwait’s English learners as conservative and sticking to the concept of the uniform and standard foreign tongue.

During the interviewing process, however, trainee teachers were able to look beneath the superficial criterion of accents or language birth right and discover many other important properties of an ideal TESOL professional. Our combined efforts in problem identification and analysis resulted in the discovery that, among other meaningful characteristics of good and successful TESOL teachers, there should be the ability to attract learners to the English language and relevant culture without affecting the status of the mother tongue. It was widely agreed that professional English teachers should possess a keen interest in this area and use effective and innovative methods to arouse the same feelings in their pupils. They should also give preference to interactive modes of class work, and make TESOL experiences pleasant and comfortable.

As for the model educational establishment, trainee teachers concentrated on the details of teaching functionality without assessing the size of salary, the level of administrative constrictions in regard to teachers, or the social backgrounds of pupils and their parents. The lesser they knew about the realities of the real work-world context, the harder it would be for them to survive through challenges faced in their first jobs in schools. The validity of that hypothesis is supported by the fact that many graduate trainee teachers became disappointed in their profession upon their teaching practice experiences.

To get back to the best model of educational institutions, trainee teachers preferred private establishments to government schools. The former were praised for

greater depth of the subject delivery, more engaging and interactive teaching techniques, wider scope of knowledge presentation, and lesser authoritarian methods of class management. Rana<sub>TT</sub> described the climate of private establishments as follows:

They know how to attract students to school. They love school. For us, when there's a holiday, we say hooray. For them, they like to go to school. They focus on the relationship between schools and students more than learning. They have activities and everything a student should have.

Teachers in private institutions had more chances to get closer with their pupils in order to facilitate their learning. Husa<sub>TT</sub> who had some experience of teaching English in a private school recalled that “[t]he best time in the class, when teaching the girls, was when we went outside the class and prepared for the lesson”. The approach to EFL in government schools was considered more formal and less attentive to learners. Husa<sub>TT</sub> criticised rigidity of learning instruments in public schools: “You have one form of lesson plan. You can't change anything. You have to stick with everything.” The tightness of instructional frames in public institutions made trainee teachers uneasy about entering those conservative sites.

Realities of Kuwaiti schools challenged the best aspirations and efforts of novice teachers to implement their knowledge to the fullest. When completing the programmes and upon graduation they showed a high level of concern to get informed about the latest approaches and delivery techniques in teaching methodology. However, when coming to schools, instead of training themselves in intricate aspects of curriculum delivery, they had to spend too much time on maintaining discipline in classrooms or fulfilling the required tasks given that pupils demonstrated rather reluctant attitude to English. Being subjected to unpredictability and spontaneity of real learning contexts, they understood the importance of psychological and methodological types of knowledge, but wanted to receive practical assistance and supervision which were

lacking within the programme frameworks.

To conclude, the overwhelming majority of participants spoke of the traditional teacher knowledge base model. Given an extensive body of literature concerning the most recent development of trends in that area, I was troubled by the fact that only few respondents addressed critical aspects of the knowledge base model such as culture learning and meta-cognition, or self-development by educating oneself about the latest trends in TESOL. Only two lecturers from the pool talked about the value of those elements for accurately perceiving the world on one's own terms and keeping in touch with the latest changes and shifts in sociolinguistic challenging environments. The problem of raising critical awareness among participants of training programmes will be discussed under Theme 6.

## **Theme II – 2: Presentation of English in the Teacher Education Curriculum**

This theme has emerged as a result of discussions that took place between myself and trainee teachers or lecturers concerning the characteristics of GE. The characteristics of GE have already been described by trainee teachers in detail in answer to the first research question (Topic I), which covered participants' general attitudes and conceptualisations. However, under Topic II, more specific representations of GE in the CBE and KU curricula will be presented: English as a global language, EFL/ESL issues, and English as a medium of instruction will be analysed by trainee teachers and lecturers, specifically with regard to teachers' training.

It seemed logical that understanding of the social and linguistic intricacies of English as a global phenomenon, as a language hosting deviations or varieties, and as EFL/ESL would be available only to those who received adequate training. I suspected that the majority of the mass public did not think about whether English was a foreign or second language in Kuwait's context, while future English language teachers should feel the distinction. Similar considerations were evident when discussing the role of

culture in language learning or policy in the state educational institutions. Lecturers' viewpoints were added to support trainee teachers' applicable discourses with more precise terminology and a wider scope of vision.

***Presentation of the idea of GE in the curriculum.***

I was interested to know what scope of information concerning GE was presented to trainee teachers as part of their curricula. I supposed that the more they learn about the phenomenon during the completion of courses, the better they will be prepared for their careers. The extent of GE-related materials as present in the programmes would predict the nature of professional training being practiced.

Exactly 99% of trainee teachers who filled out the questionnaire agreed that they conceptualise English as a global phenomenon. Judging from trainee teachers' responses, I would suggest that their awareness stem from their observations of Kuwaiti socio-linguistic reality rather than professional curricula. During interview sessions, they provided an array of definitions of this phenomenon; the most commonly found being the international usage of the tongue. Another was speakers' ability to understand the global language regardless of accents. Some trainee teachers mentioned the implications of dominance and universal proliferation, and the majority defined it as the standard educational medium which can be understood globally.

Lecturers were more specific in their definitions. Suad<sub>L</sub>, for example, defined GE as follows: "It is English [that is] used as a Lingua Franca to communicate well and transfer the message." Khaild<sub>L</sub> stated that English no longer belonged exclusively to the Anglophone inner circle. It was available to everyone who was able to formulate messages freely and convey meaning regardless of heavy accents or grammar irregularities.

Lecturers rightfully doubted if their students were aware of the specifics of GE. Anwar<sub>L</sub> hypothesised that future English language teachers should focus on learning

and studying 'Standard English' (the issue of legitimacy of this term will be addressed in the discussion section). He stressed that the new generation of teachers should first appropriate the rules and norms of academic, textbook English before indulging themselves into the diversity of World Englishes. All lecturers stressed that there should be a distinction between language varieties as by-products of the GE effect, versus irregular variants of the tongue that may result from poor proficiency. It seems that from the lecturer's point of view, any advancement in contemporary socio-linguistic theory was considered important but irrelevant to their students' lives, since trainee teachers were too preoccupied with their struggles in grammar and communication to reflect over broader theoretical and ideological matters.

While lecturers demonstrated their awareness of the GE effect with an awareness of the array of language varieties, and considered this phenomenon a regular feature of contemporary sociolinguistics, that ideological awareness was not transferred to their students who showed a lesser extent of tolerance. Though all of the lecturers in the study were non-native speakers themselves, many of them expressed negative attitudes towards other non-native English language speakers working as teachers in Kuwait. Their irregular pronunciation was reported to hinder the process of EFL learning, and to complicate understanding. It was no coincidence that almost half of the trainee teachers' pool (49%) agreed with the statement that a 'good' English non-native speaker should speak with either a British or American accent. The Kuwaiti accent was perceived as totally inappropriate. "If you speak English with a Kuwaiti accent, it's like you are mocking English," Sama<sub>TT</sub> said. That, and other similar sentiments by trainee teachers, showed that the authoritarian spell of the native-speaker myth has not yet been stripped away. Thus, and as further research will demonstrate, the issues of identifying and allowing for variation in use of the language still remained the weak point in teacher training curricula.



The teacher training programme is very Anglophone in nature, in that it focuses just on the British and American use of the English language and related cultural constructs. It would be better if it also described or referred to other legitimate varieties of English from other countries, i.e., South Africa, Malaysia, India, etc. On the global scale, English belongs to the whole world; it is no longer associated with only Britain and America. The idea that the programme's current design is narrow in this regard is my personal point. I noticed that trainee teachers were satisfied with the status quo being unaware of the rich depositary of GE varieties. Meanwhile, I observed that lecturers accepted the current situation despite knowing about the presence and legitimacy of alternative Englishes. My conclusion is that CBE and KU do not deliver the appropriate training of future teachers regarding the global aspects of English. Moreover, these institutions do not plan to address the applicable issues in the nearest future. Why have not CBE and KU transformed this awareness of GE into the pedagogically relevant element of training? Evidently the reason is rooted in Kuwait's instructional policy that is shaped historically and politically by British and American models, and the concept of GE does not yet fit smoothly enough into the current educational objectives of the state.

### ***Presentation of English as EFL/ESL.***

I supposed that the theoretical difference between English treated as a foreign language (EFL) and English treated as a second language (ESL) should be covered in the framework of any professional English language programme. Understanding of the EFL/ESL dichotomy would better orient future teachers in understanding of English in terms of standards and specifics of its usage in the learning environment. Student teachers showed low awareness of the difference between EFL and ESL. There were a substantial number of those who saw no difference between a 'foreign' and a 'second'

language. They provided rather awkward definitions, and only after I explained the nuances between the two, were they able to differentiate and give their views.

To illustrate this point, some trainee teachers' responses to the question about this distinction are provided below. "English functions as a second language when people have their first language already," Sara<sub>TT</sub> plainly said. Another trainee teacher put together the properties of foreignness and novelty when trying to define EFL. In general, they did not seem to have an understanding of the difference between the socio-linguistic contexts where EFL and ESL function.

The proportion of those trainee teachers who perceived English as a second language and those who perceived it as a foreign language was almost equal. The proponents of the former viewpoint explained their choice by the fact that English was used in each sphere of local affairs, including mass-culture and education. The supporters of the latter approach argued that Kuwaitis employed English only when travelling abroad or socialising with Anglophone speakers. Finally, there were only a few trainee teachers who intuitively sensed that the EFL or ESL status was related to the context and aim of communication. Abeer<sub>TT</sub> explained her choice of speaking English in this or that situation as follows: "I use English among my friends. That's it. In society and with my family, no way. My brothers could speak with me, but it's silly. Why would I speak with my own brothers and sisters in English?" She evidently meant that in Kuwait's society English was the means of communication between participants of the narrow professional groups (e.g., teachers of English). The further dialogue with Abeer<sub>TT</sub> revealed basic awareness of the EFL/ESL dichotomy. Unfortunately, that understanding was a rare case in the trainee teachers' pool. The heterogeneity of vague or wrong answers to the question about the nature of English as a foreign or second language could be explained by the quality of educational programmes where little attention was paid to the issue of difference between the two concepts.

Lecturers naturally demonstrated higher accuracy in defining EFL versus ESL in the local environment. As Suad<sub>L</sub> put it, the educated strata used English as the second language even outside the professional realm since they read, talked, and wrote in that language for the sake of information processing or entertainment (e.g., internet and TV). However, trainee teacher graduates of English language departments at Kuwait's colleges were taught English as a foreign language because they intended to use it as a medium of instruction in classrooms. Although lecturers said that they were not confused by EFL versus ESL terminology, and it was substantially represented in curricular of their educational establishments, trainee teachers often mixed the two definitions together.

***English as a medium of instruction.***

The choice of the language for instruction in schools was discussed under Topic I, Theme 3. However, this very section will discuss the dichotomy of Arabic/English as the medium of curricular delivery within English language departments. The balance between the source and target languages when delivering professional knowledge would predict the current conditions of professional training. The latter should address the complexity of relationships between the foreign and mother tongues to provide the efficient teaching of English without deteriorating the status of Arabic. To remind, 79% of respondents agreed that the content of professional TESOL courses should be presented in English, while 21% thought that TESOL subjects should be taught in Arabic. It was interesting to find that within the group of people studying to become English teachers. Analysis of interview sessions showed the lack of uniformity or straight forwardness in the viewpoints concerning the language of instruction for the participants of teacher training programmes.

The substantial proportion of trainee teachers stated that they would like to have all of their college subjects taught in English. The main reason cited was that English-

medium professional curricular would provide them with an English-immersion-like experience. The proponents of this approach would gladly exclude Arabic since they were taught general subjects in Arabic at the high-school stage and wanted to avoid repetitiveness and iteration of content. Moreover, they believed that exposure to different realms of knowledge through the use of English instruction for different subject areas would strengthen their linguistic skills and improve their proficiency in the language. Khaild<sub>L</sub> suggested mediating the gap through Anglicisation of some courses besides English such as psychology, research methods courses, or vocational subjects. In his view, hearing English outside of TESOL classrooms, trainee teachers may begin to feel more comfortable with the language. By means of necessity of using English for many classes, they may create a habit of academic communication in English and begin to automate their basic listening, reading, and writing skills.

Another group of respondents shared that they would accept the presence of Arabic as the medium for general courses but would insist on having subjects within their college major taught in English. Those trainee teachers seemed to be mainly guided by the desire of saving their native tongue from extinction and preserving its dignity. As one Reham<sub>TT</sub> put it, “I can use it in daily life, but Arabic is more than this. It has a higher position.” Referring to the theme of language, power and identity, Reham<sub>TT</sub> along with several other trainee teachers associated higher usages of the native tongue as a signifier of their personal identity and local culture.

While almost each one from the trainee teacher pool was ready to perform all their studies in English theoretically, they faced multiple problems if it were implemented in reality. As it has been already acknowledged, the levels of EFL/ESL proficiency within graduates of Kuwaiti schools remain low. While the logical policy for them as future English teachers would be Anglicisation of professional curricular, they would most likely find themselves facing unknown vocabulary, having trouble

with grammar, missing the meanings of concepts, and needing to heavily rely on dictionaries. In present courses where English was the language of instruction, this made the learning process slower and diverted trainee teachers' attention from the content of the courses.

While conducting my research, I heard many suggestions concerning introduction of English outside the narrow context of language courses and making it a genuine tool of communication in tertiary education establishments. As mentioned previously, proposals for delivering certain subjects in English were continuously put forward. Khaild<sub>L</sub> mentioned that he suggested this approach during one of the college's committee meetings. At first he had thought that teachers of courses such as psychology or literature should accept the proposal since all of them have done their degrees in the United States, Britain, or Australia, and therefore, their English should have been good enough to use it as a medium of instruction. He was disappointed to learn that the lecturers did not seem interested to use their linguistic background to raise the awareness of English as a tool for learning by teaching their courses with it. He admitted that the proposal might be effective only when teachers of other than English subjects were proficient enough in this tongue to utilise it for instruction in their unique subject areas. Khaild<sub>L</sub> was convinced that teaching all subjects in English would be the best way for trainee teachers to get their education. He did not believe there were any alternative benefits to teaching in Arabic.

Upon reviewing the previous interview, and being guided by the most recent academic literature, I wondered whether there might be other reasons that averted lecturers from using English. One possible reason could be the policy requirement implying the use of Arabic during the delivery of those content subjects. Perhaps, they also had a desire to prevent the English language from overruling Arabic in academic contexts. They could have also been worried for their jobs if instruction changes to the

English language and they start to be passed over in favour of English-speaking teachers. Furthermore, having to be prepared to convey the content in two languages would impose an additional burden on them. Taking such factors into account, it becomes clear that decisions related to choosing a language of instruction are not only political, economic or emotional in nature, but may also involve elements of resistance.

### **Theme II – 3: Culture in Language Teacher Education**

This theme introduces participants' views concerning instruction on cultural issues in teacher training programmes. As discussions under Topic I have shown, the cultural element matters a lot for both future teachers and practicing lecturers of English. Data elicited from participants when analysing this theme indicate that culture-specific training should be included to professional curricula to increase its quality.

I should stress here that almost 70% of trainee teachers were not registered in or had not completed the English Culture Learning course when this investigation took place. The immediate consequence of that trend was that the largest part of the learning audience failed to provide even a concise understanding and analysis of many hot issues pertaining to World Englishes, language policy making, and intercultural communication. In other words, while mentors stayed abreast of the situation, they were not able to share their vision of the most important cultural milestones due to administrative constrictions. Discussing the lamentable gap with both trainee teachers and lecturer groups, we concluded that professional knowledge base in the given educational institutions should be modified so that to include cultural awareness not only for the sake of professional progress but also to facilitate one's integration into the general socio-linguistic environment.

In regard to the point of language and culture, the questionnaire showed that over 81% of trainee teachers agreed that they would like to know how residents of other countries deal with English language teaching and learning. However, it became evident

later on during the interviews that their understanding of “other countries” did not go beyond those representing the Inner Circle. Similarly, lecturers did not object to introducing new ELT approaches from other countries. They agreed that existing curricula explored mainly U.K. and U.S. contexts and suggested expanding the vision to explore English language teaching methods of other countries. Interestingly, when asked from which countries they thought this information should come? they recommended Australia, Canada, or New Zealand – all countries within the inner circle of English language and culture. Frarah<sub>L</sub> expressed the concern, “I think we are presenting the Anglophone culture more than the global. We either forget this part or didn’t have this component or tool. We are aware of it, but did we try to expose them [students] to these issues? Even with our syllabus and curriculum, I think we forgot this part”.

The survey addressed the issue of cultural awareness in the context of language teacher education along the following axes: that a good speaker of English should be aware of the English language culture; that teaching children about American/British culture would make the English language easier for them to understand; whether a course should be taken during one’s teacher preparation about English Language Culture, whether a course should be taken in order to learn techniques of presenting English to pupils without negatively affecting their relationship to the Arabic culture.

During interviews, only a few respondents discussed the alternative of teaching English without also mentioning its cultural implications. On this issue, there were many discussions (and even arguments) concerning the age at which cultural aspects should be introduced to learners. Some trainee teachers raised their voices for starting from the basics in the earlier grades and proceeding towards deeper elements of socio-linguistics at colleges and universities. Some said that small children needed to establish their own culture first, and then be trained in multicultural awareness, while the others

argued that culture should be presented to pupils from their first steps. Despite differences in attitudes concerning this issue, the majority of the trainee teachers felt that the lack of culture in language learning would be, as May<sub>TT</sub> called it “a sort of blindness” and that they needed to be knowledgeable in it to “teach English well”.

Trainee teachers cited examples of how poor knowledge of cultural implications associated with the English language can create misunderstandings or awkward situations. On the survey, 54% of respondents agreed that a good speaker of English should be aware of the English language culture. Over 71% felt that teaching children American/British culture would make the English language easier for them to understand. Respondents mentioned that some youngsters swear in the foreign tongue without knowing the meaning of the words. Others spoke about collocations such as “it’s raining cats and dogs” and the fact that English idioms differed from Arabic ones and won’t be understood. For example, Arabs say “the girl is like the moon,” meaning that she is beautiful. Since this is a common phrase in Arabic but not in English, there was concern that the feeling of such phrases, which carry Arabic cultural sensibilities, may be lost in translation. Maha<sub>TT</sub> reportedly saw a Kuwaiti girl wearing a T-shirt with the slogan, “Marijuana is very important to me”. When the meaning of the print phrase was explained to her, she was in shock and ashamed. These episodes demonstrate that the failure to understand the non-literal meanings of foreign phrases might cause discomfort and various complications in social situations.

Over 88% of trainee teachers said they would like to take a course during teacher preparation about the English Language Culture, and over 92% wished to learn the techniques of presenting English to pupils without negatively affecting the Arabic culture. During data collection, the elective course “English Language Culture” was piloted only at CBE, while trainee teachers from KU lacked a dedicated programme



covering the issue. Below is a short description of the course as stated in the department's handbook:

This course is designed to explore the significance of culture in learning English as a foreign/second language. It thus focuses on the relationship between the target language and the target culture. The components as well as the characteristics of the target culture receive special emphasis. The course is also concerned with similarities and differences between the first culture and the target culture.

It should be noted that the use of “the” and the singular “culture” indicates the presence of only one idealized target. It omitted discussion of the plethora of English cultures worldwide. Perhaps for this reason Wafa<sub>L</sub> lamented that she was not really happy with the course. To begin with, she thought that the title should be something more like “Language and Culture Worldwide” or “Language and Social Context.” She was also dissatisfied with the fact that it focused mainly on the ‘target’ English culture as pertaining to British and American cultures only, excluding discussion of English as a global culture, utilized by and taught in many non-natively Anglophone countries. Wafa<sub>L</sub> said that a more global look on the relationships between language and cultures should be included. She also wished the programme of her home establishment would be focused more on the culture presenting it not only as a separate course but also as an important integrative element of other programme modules.

Some of the problems hindering wider presentation of the global cultural issues seemed to be time restrictions, lecturers' orientation and outdated policy. It seemed that more effort should be made to scaffold learners' skill base more sequentially and straightforwardly. A balance should be kept between administrative issues (the number of academic courses, their regularity and order of presentation within the curriculum, etc.) and the tasks of academic progress (the scope of content within each course, testing

and practical training). Themes related to the problems of language management in various types of societies or the methods of cultural education in various age groups of learners could be included to any standard lectures on Applied Linguistics, Grammar, Children's Literature or Psychology and Methodology on a regular basis. Student teachers and lecturers could organise and participate in round-table talks or workshops to trace the relationship between language and culture in their daily and professional lives. It seemed that most trainee teachers lacked the proper cultural perspective due to the absence of information. Lecturers could also encourage their students to read more materials concerning the problem and tell the others about the results of their independent research. Those micro-activities (i.e., small presentations, case briefs and etc.) could be conducted continuously to remediate cultural blindness among future teachers.

#### **Theme II – 4: Policy of English as a Language of Instruction**

The theme presented here tackles the respondents' perception of English as a medium of instruction in the programme framework. Third-party literature and my own communications with research participants demonstrated the value of issues related to instructional policy making in teacher education and I believe that exploring those issues could contribute to the training quality of teaching professionals. Therefore, although the issue of policy is not covered in the programmes under research the fact that it was highlighted during interview sessions makes it worthwhile to discuss in an attempt to understand the issues related to the process of preparing the future English language teacher cohort.

Analysis of interviewees' responses proved that not a single trainee teacher participating in the research was aware of the concepts pertaining to language policy making or, better say in the present context, as a language of instruction. Taking into account the explanation provided by Ricento (2006), educational establishments are the

most vivid localities “where language policies determine or influence what language(s) we will speak, whether our language is ‘good/acceptable’ or ‘bad/unacceptable’ for particular purposes” (p. 21). It is logical to expect that ELT professional programmes would inform students about the relevant power relations in educational settings requiring the employment of a particular language standard. However, neither CBE nor KU provide a relevant module of information (it is too optimistic and perhaps unrealistic) or at least a presentation of the issue in the curriculum along with issues pertaining to the future of English and its status in society. Consequently students are not able to suggest any valid definitions of the phenomenon or reflect on its importance.

Most participants believed language policymaking to be something associated with politics or the ways language affected political affairs. Heba<sub>TT</sub> emphatically exclaimed: “[K]eep me away from political stuff.” She misunderstood the meaning of the word ‘policy’. It wasn’t just trainee teachers – lecturers made the same mistake. Khalid<sub>L</sub> mentioned the name of Alan Davies who wrote in depth about the problem. However, instead of reflecting on what language policy meant to him, he referred to the lesson scenario that was applied to some Chinese students studying English in the United States. “They had to get involved, and in order to make them good learners of the English language, they discussed political issues like human rights in China,” he explained, which was not a genuine meaning of the concept.

A remark made by Suad<sub>L</sub> helped me to look deeper at possible reasons for this lack of familiarity with the topic. This particular lecturer considered introduction of the subject language policymaking to the programme unnecessary. She taught methodology and thought that trainee teachers should be more concentrated on relevant subject-delivery techniques instead of dealing with policies that had not yet been clearly defined by the Ministry of Education. Suad<sub>L</sub> stressed that her task was to prepare an efficient ELT workforce in terms of presentation of the content in real classrooms, while the

relationship between English and Arabic should be the government's problem. This is an attitude described by Ricento (2006) when he referred to the trend of maintaining the “(mythical) standard variety” prescribed by default in particular social contexts, while “most citizens accept it as logical, natural, fair, and efficient” (p. 20). In other words, lecturers do not feel themselves responsible for sharpening trainee teachers' attention on language planning and language rights in education since they regard Anglicisation of programmes as reasonable and necessary, which reveals the inability or unwillingness of Kuwait's educationalists to discuss openly the status of English in comparison to Arabic. Such passive attitude contradicts the claims made by such an expert in the field as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a) who has stressed that information on how to raise awareness of language policymaking issues and language rights must become “an obligatory part of the training of every teacher and of school authorities” (p. 502). From this perspective, regulation of relationships between the mother and foreign tongues in education should be each professional's responsibility instead of being a burden on the shoulders of solely state officials.

Upon identifying this attitude, I decided to talk about the importance of such issues at the classroom level, and started by explaining that the term signified more than a plain discussion of “political stuff”. In the context of each particular interview I explained that the politics of language analysed how countries handled languages other than their mother tongues. To introduce trainee teachers to the issue, I mentioned that relevant policies included maintaining a balance between the first language of the country and foreign languages/cultures. I also explained that the study of language policy helped to decide the measures that were utilised by governments to preserve the status of the native language, although some countries employed prohibitive techniques that deteriorated the heterogeneity of the sociocultural context. I think the explanation of what the term entails, helped them become interested in the phenomenon which they

all regarded as a promising realm of knowledge.

As the discussions about language policymaking with regard to observing the situations in other countries progressed, Rana<sub>TT</sub> illustrated the case of active language defence (without using the term) by talking about the absence of English-medium post signs in France to emphasise the exclusiveness and priority of the mother tongue. She compared that approach with permissive language defence in Canada where English and French existed on equal terms. She continued on to analyse language rights in the above-mentioned states as compared to Kuwait. While praising the desire of other nations to preserve their native language or maintain a balance between it and foreign tongues, she expressed pity concerning the status of Arabic. According to Rana<sub>TT</sub>, Arabic was consciously put under stress and forced to give up its positions to English:

I don't want Arabic as only religious. We should at least use Arabic in each part of our life. Without practicing, we'll lose Arabic. Maybe you know many [young people] who barely can speak Arabic because of English. We should have some Arabic subjects so they can keep their identities and so they don't forget. They will forget it, especially those who use English at home. We have to keep this part.

Similar responses were elicited from other participants who witnessed many of their colleagues – fellow students of English language departments, refusing to use Arabic in academic and private contexts. When I discussed the problem with some of the most enthusiastic, pro-Anglophone members of the trainee teachers' pool they explained their attitude to the mother tongue by various reasons. Some of them were frightened away from Arabic at school where it was delivered in an authoritarian, teacher-centred manner. Those participants were associating use of the mother tongue with standard Arabic (Fus'ha). In its turn, the local dialect could not support their intellectual activities to the fullest extent and therefore was used in limited social contexts only.

Others considered it outdated or failing to serve the needs of the modern technologically- and business-oriented society.

All trainee teachers, regardless of previous knowledge concerning language as a part and medium of social (including instructional) policies expressed interest and eagerness to study it as part of their programme. Lecturers, overall, also did not mind adding the discussion of language planning and language policy making issues to the curriculum. These emerging attitudes and change in participants' perspectives in regards to their academic activities was promoted from within and grounded in their own responses to the challenging questions. The details of such experience will be provided below under Theme 6.

### **Theme II – 5: Is Knowing the Language Enough to be an English Teacher?**

In the previous themes I provided participants' ideational framework concerning types of knowledge/skills required for teachers and their views of content knowledge as present in their programmes. This section comprises discourses that could be related to programme implementation of another two formal elements of teacher knowledge base, i.e. pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge. The theme is comprised of two aspects. First, participants described potential future challenges for novice teachers in Kuwait's learning settings, defining the types of knowledge and skills – other than proficiency in English language – which would be essential for the profession. Second, participants provided comments and concerns regarding the adequacy of their teacher training curricula to prepare them for the contemporary educational settings of Kuwait. In this section, trainee teachers' discourses are supplemented by lecturers' ideas concerning the structure and content of the professional programmes.

#### ***Challenges future English language teachers might face in their work.***

One of the key aspects of any training programme is the preparation of trainee teachers for entering actual classrooms where they will deal not with theoretical

concepts but with living subjects. Practicing lecturers could help trainee teachers in understanding possible threats in the profession and prepare them for coping with those common difficulties. Research showed that participants were aware of multiple problems and hindrances that might scare the novice teacher away from schools. One of the most powerful ‘stop signs’ was the weak relevance of training curricular in contrast with the needs of schools. Student teachers told stories of their friends and relatives who have already entered the profession, reiterating that when one started working at school as a teacher, they should be prepared “to forget everything they learned at the college” as Heba<sub>TT</sub> exclaimed. According to Heba<sub>TT</sub> it was a totally different environment where teaching theories were outperformed by the irregular practices of the school. Those second-hand sentiments were supported by personal experiences obtained during her classroom fieldwork.

Student teachers entering the schools were shocked by the outdated, teacher-centred and rigid techniques that were imposed on them and their pupils. As Manar<sub>TT</sub> said, it was hard to believe that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when such a huge stress is placed on intuitive acquisition of language and the free flow of communication, learners were still being forced to memorize long bilingual word lists (as it was common for the Grammar translation method) or survive through tiresome drilling until being able to reproduce the grammar or lexical structure by heart (the principle of The Audio-lingual method). It was not the particular methodology that she criticised, but rather the narrow and mechanical treatment of the available approaches.

Diaa<sub>TT</sub> confessed that she tried to introduce an innovative approach to EFL that she learnt about from the curricular of Spanish and Latin American schools. The children were shown objects like apples, oranges, peas, and other fruits. Things were named first by the teacher and then by the classroom. However, that technique of demonstration accompanied by interactive games and quizzes aroused discontent of the

student's supervisor.

One of the most commonly referred-to drawbacks of ELT methodology courses was the idealisation of young learners. "I've just taken a course, and it's like the children are [going to be] angels," Reham<sub>TT</sub> laughed. Real-life children were far from angels; instead of listening attentively they were ready to oppose the teacher with breaches of discipline, rude remarks, or aversion towards the process of learning, or the subject of English specifically. They were difficult to control and a challenge to get them involved in classroom activities. Due to these realities, trainee teachers kept the following idea in mind: English language teachers should possess a rich depositary of techniques to manage their classroom by delivering the subject matter in an accurate and creative manner. But with such tales of creative oppression by school administrations, it was not surprising that this task frightened some of the trainee teacher graduates leaving their English department courses, and decreased their motivation for progressing through the professional pipeline.

Some trainee teachers became disappointed in the realm of teaching even before starting the chosen career path and planned to leave the realm of teaching completely upon graduation. It was a common reaction among those who have had initial experiences of entering the classroom field-work context. As one Hussa<sub>TT</sub> acknowledged, the change in her attitude to teaching had nothing to do with unmanageability of children, but rather resulted from rigid methodologies and outdated school curricular. During her practicum, she kept revolting against the one-for-all flow of teaching techniques and dreamt about greater flexibility and cooperation between all stakeholders. That desire was matched by many other respondents.

Sincere concerns of prospective English teachers showed that the issues of economic well-being in terms of salary, or relatively lower prestige of the teaching profession in comparison to placement in large international companies troubled them



less than the daunting rigidity of the existing national education system. They felt themselves invisible to the school administrations and powerless in the face of the general inertia and conservatism of attitudes towards English language instruction.

### ***Curriculum – considering changes?***

I was interested to elicit conceptualisations of a balanced training programme to prepare good English teachers for the Kuwaiti educational system. That was done taking into account participants' ideas concerning teacher knowledge base at the content subject, pedagogical and curricular levels. Addressing this issue, Wafa<sub>L</sub> moved beyond listing important subjects and suggested involving the schools in a sort of cooperation with the teacher training departments. She emphasised, that there should be arrangements with the primary- and secondary-stage school levels so that they could follow trainee teachers being involved in practicum. Representatives of each level of administration could join forces to define new education policies that could produce positive impact and change the situation for the better. Farah<sub>L</sub> shared her vision that “a good training programme should focus not only on the theoretical but equally on the practical side”. Unfortunately, trainee teachers received only one pedagogical and methodological field-training session toward the very end of their courses at the college. Farah<sub>L</sub> believed that this approach was not adequate to polish trainee teachers' practical teaching skills.

The lecturers also agreed that for the sake of preparing trainee teachers to effectively function in a challenging academic and professional environment, the programme should aim to improve their basic skills of English language, otherwise the most important messages would be neutralised by poor knowledge of grammar. Unfortunately, due to the drawbacks of the national education system, many secondary school graduates were unable to catch up with their training curricular and needed assistance with the language before they could get at the subject-matter of their courses.

In relation to this issue, Anwar<sub>L</sub> objected to introducing too many “irrelevant” subjects such as literature. The excessive depth of covering this discipline in teacher training curricular was one of the drawbacks from his viewpoint.

One of the core elements of curriculum discussed was structural linguistics – the English language itself, in all of its structural complexity. Suad<sub>L</sub> emphasized the importance of the teacher being comfortable with each component – phonetics, morphology, syntax and grammar. Besides that, they should be aware of the Kuwaiti education system and the needs of the students at schools. However, the global issues and trends in English education around the world should not be overshadowed by structural linguistics.

The majority of trainee teachers would like to have more conversation classes in order to practice in oral English. Among other subjects they would like to have as part of the curriculum, they listed grammar studies, writing, EFL/ESL, and Applied Linguistics. They were also interested in increasing the proportion of classroom training to field TESOL experience. Halla<sub>TT</sub> lamented that graduates lacked presentation skills, which would be an important part of their professional roles. She also mentioned that some courses were taken only for the sake of obtaining credits and objected to such a utilitarian approach to the construction of professional training programmes, and wished to be better informed on the issues she would really need in her career. As a result of participating in my research, a few trainee teachers also expressed interest in cultural studies and sociolinguistics.

Being on the threshold of maturation in the personal and professional sense, trainee teachers were aware of the sociolinguistic complexity that awaited them within the framework of Kuwait’s education system. They planned to refine their skills and knowledge pertaining to children’s psychology and classroom management. They were fed up with theory and wanted to immerse themselves in real-life environments. As

Besma<sub>TT</sub> lamented: “It would be really important to have more teaching pedagogy courses, otherwise we won’t be able to deal with pupils. We need something besides theory to teach English to children.” Finally as the interviews progressed, trainee teachers were increasingly becoming aware of the cultural and political heterogeneity they were going to live with. Their earnest desire to know about various aspects of language teaching and policymaking was clear. For example, Gena<sub>TT</sub> reflected about teaching English in Kuwait for learners of various cultural backgrounds. She hypothesised the situation of dealing with a pupil whose parents are not Kuwaitis and stated: “I know how to deal with her and not hurt her feelings. I’d be careful about my language and what I would say in that situation.” The assumptions of how to behave in real classroom settings did not tackle just the matter of English. Fay<sub>TT</sub> emphasised the value of classroom climate where pupils should know “how to smile to people, be blessed, and it will be easy.” These quotes speak of the earnest desire of prospective teachers to locate cultural understanding within their future field of work.

A few words should be added about those high-stakes standards that permeated Kuwait’s teacher training programmes. Jude<sub>L</sub> mentioned that the majority of trainee teachers studying to become English language teachers failed to reach national and international standards concerning proficiency in English, not to mention other specific disciplines such as applied linguistics, and so on. She described the ideology of her home department as follows: “If you have this conception about English, you had better think twice before you stay. You are treated here as students who started somewhere [else], we are not here to teach the ABC’s of English.” In other words, lecturers were not likely to assist their trainee teachers with attaining higher proficiency in English once they reached the department. Poorly prepared participants were therefore left on their own trying to cope with the bulk of new complex knowledge delivered in the foreign tongue.

## **Theme II – 6: The Goal of Training – To Make Novice Teachers Aware**

A few words are needed to explain the logic of the current theme and sub-themes. This theme consists of two sub-themes. First, participants expressed their opinions in regards to the education received by graduates completing the teacher education programmes. This point was added to the analysis to make a link to the sensitive issue of raised awareness among trainee teachers concerning their teaching profession and the utilisation of English in their social and professional life. Thus the second sub-section within theme six revealed how participants became aware of the critical issues as a result of discussions which could be described as the ‘raised awareness exercise’.

### ***Quality of trainee teacher graduates.***

I interviewed participants concerning the quality of trainee teacher graduates as one of the factors showing the appropriateness and meaningfulness of programmes. The responses provided portraits of those who were being prepared to enter Kuwait’s schools as English language teachers. Respondents have stressed that no generalisations could be made when answering the issue of quality. As Khaild<sub>L</sub> put it “it’s the excellent students that leave and the struggling ones who end up teaching.” In other words, there are those trainee teacher graduates who will end up teaching and others who will choose a different career, and there were no factors to define the proportion of those fitting either of those two categories.

In regard to the quality, from lecturers’ perspective, the most serious problem was trainee teachers’ poor command of English upon entering training. It was clear in discussions that, among all the issues surrounding ELT in Kuwait, the problem of trainee teachers’ proficiency in English was the hottest. For example, Al-Edwani (2005) has observed that by commencing working at schools Kuwaiti teachers lacked proper speaking skills and in their daily interaction with learners suffered from “deficiencies in

communicative competence and self-expression” (p. 31). Al-Darwish (2006) has acknowledged poor grammar and pronunciation among primary-school teachers who graduated from local training programmes.

Khaild<sub>L</sub> specified that English language teachers’ training require not only fluency but rather fluency plus accuracy. As he defined the task, “we start where others stop.” In other words, the ultimate goal of the school system was to deliver an English language speaker having a pre-defined array of basic skills. Tertiary teacher education however, aimed at moulding a more conscious listener and speaker of English who would operate sophisticated types of knowledge. Unfortunately, that noble task could not always be achieved on the basis of the poor grammar and communication skills that trainee teachers acquired at their schools prior to arrival in the programme.

Khaild<sub>L</sub> also acknowledged that many young Kuwaitis applied to college/university English departments with the wrong motivation to improve their language skills:

They don’t know what to choose. The majority probably find themselves in this department because they just like English. You can’t jump your gun and say, “I like English, and I would like to be an English teacher.” This is a different matter.

Joining teacher training meant expanded responsibilities that included, first of all, articulation of spoken English that came mostly through writing. Student teachers had to digest a lot of specific literature in order to obtain a theoretical database of English and, in parallel, had to work much harder than students in other departments if they intended to be treated with respect as experts in their field. Besides being aware of linguistics, they needed to learn many other important principles of pedagogy, psychology, and related disciplines to help them to be not only proficient at teaching, but be able to manage the classroom as well.

With poor backgrounds in English, trainee teachers were poised between the two precipices. On the one hand, being scared to make mistakes, they often hesitated before producing a piece of speech or a written text in English. This fear not only limited their opportunities for practice, but built up over time so that a substantial portion of discomfort and frustration would accumulate. On the other hand, there were attempts of dropping the reins and speaking English at the cost of irregular grammar or pronunciation which is a serious drawback for any TESOL trainee teacher. Abeer<sub>TT</sub> wittingly summarised the situation as follows “it is accepted to make mistakes on the part of learners who are in the process learning, but she as a teacher is allowed to do it only once a year.”

According to Farah<sub>L</sub>, establishing an efficient dialogue with trainee teachers concerning fluency or accuracy of English language usage was rarely possible due to the fact that the latter mostly lacked the means to communicate fluently in the foreign tongue, and to articulate the language intelligently in terms of actually voicing their points of view and providing feedback. Thus, the matter of mastery in English remained one of the most serious problems within the context of ELT departments at colleges and universities.

A strategic assessment of the strong and weak points in regard to the professional knowledge base of teachers would most likely promote better cooperation between teachers and students, and would thereby improve the teaching and the learning process. However, I would like also to acknowledge the sense of reluctance on the part of lecturers towards trainee teachers with poorer achievements. Only Wafa<sub>L</sub> from the pool has mentioned her personal objective of introducing learners to the more flexible concept of English with an emphasis on the diversity of the language and on communicative activity being valuable regardless of errors. Khalid<sub>L</sub> provided a more common approach to the trainee teacher audience:

We do what we have to do, and if they don't want to follow these standards, it's up to them. If they want to graduate with a D, it's fine with me. I won't shed tears over that. We opt for excellence. If you accept compromises, the standards will plummet, year in and year out.

The above-cited opinion is the most assertive in non-admission of trainee teachers' failures. Overall, lecturers preferred to simplify the programme content so that learners would be able to operate on the basic level of professionalism. Under permissive or stringent approaches, the status of trainee teachers was regarded as low and hence denying them of empowerment and appreciation. I assume that senior professionals possessed little time to address the individual needs and requirements of trainee teachers partly due to administrative flaws of the programmes.

On the other hand, trainee teachers took time and effort to reflect over their own abilities and potentials. Some of them were described under Theme 1 and Theme 5. The leitmotif of trainee teachers' self-assessment was their poor grammar skills. For example Abeer<sub>TT</sub> described her feelings as follows:

I usually have problems with vocabulary. I really don't get all the words the right way. I feel like I know it but it just doesn't come to me...then later I remember it. I hate it when that happens.

It is evident that Abeer<sub>TT</sub> blames only herself for the inability to use the appropriate vocabulary freely. Implicitly she orients herself towards the native-speaker standard in terms of fluency and does not reflect over the alternatives to restore the feeling of self-dignity. She continues to say:

[W]e need courses for grammar. We don't have this. We need to learn grammar and structure. Most of the girls who come to this college don't know grammar for conversation or writing. Grammar is the important thing because we deal with it every day. If we don't do it very well, we will be behind.

These words indicate that some Kuwaiti young teachers of English are dissatisfied with their critical deficit of knowledge of the elementary morphological and syntactic properties of the language they are going to deliver. This shortage results in feelings of frustration and shame. Ghada<sub>TT</sub> states the following:

I hate it when I make grammar mistakes. I feel so ashamed. [...] Basically, I want grammar. I go everywhere, and I collect things about grammar all the time... What if someone asks me something about grammar? I'm an English teacher. [...] I'm obsessed with grammar now. I really can't express myself correctly because I'm thinking about the grammar before I speak.

Another example came from Alia<sub>TT</sub> who expressed her feelings more laconically saying: "Sometimes we get frustrated when we can't express ourselves in English properly." Dissatisfaction with language skills could be commonly found in almost all the trainee teachers' discourses and revealed the overall negative and self-denying attitude towards themselves as non-native English language speakers. However, each of them stressed their own ability and desire to improve. It was not rare that they confessed to spending huge amounts of time on language training. As Abeer<sub>TT</sub> later stated: "I'm going to prove myself all the time. That's my job." This attitude provided a ground for further discussion of trainee teachers' self-image construction and the ways to re-assess their potential in the realm of English language teaching.

### ***Raised awareness – slowly but surely.***

In this subsection I am going to demonstrate how the research process facilitated the firmament of critical awareness in trainee teachers concerning their command of the English language and teaching profession, given many sensitive issues such as GE, relationships between the source and target languages/cultures, language and instructional policies, and the array of skills and knowledge essential for English teachers. Since my research did not imply the deep analysis of methodologies which are



being practiced in the given training programmes, I would just briefly delineate the lines of action that are supposed to arouse critical thinking among future or beginning teachers of English in Kuwait. First, I fully support Llurda (2009) who has stressed that the phenomenon of Global or World English and the problem of 'native-speakerism' do not excuse English language learners from the Outer and Expanding Circles from mastering their knowledge of the tongue. In an effort to hurl the tyranny of the 'native speaker', any conscious and diligent non-native speaker should not forget about achieving accuracy and fluency on the basic levels of writing, reading, listening and speaking. Therefore, I am far from suggesting that high standards in terms of English language acquisition should be refuted. My proposal concerns changing the objectives of local teacher training programmes and shifting ideological accents. As part of such claim, in compliance with Sharifian (2009), Ramanathan and Morgan (2009) and many others, I would encourage trainee teachers to get informed on the issues pertaining to culture, literature, sociology of language and other related disciplines in order to enrich one's individual horizon and professional knowledge base as well as to increase meta-awareness.

I also strongly recommend encouraging both trainee teachers and lecturers participating in teacher training programmes to discuss their learning objectives and critical matters. The current formal and informal policies do not allow the free exchange of ideas and opinions so that each sub-population is left to their own devices. The meaningfulness of disputing the long-established can be demonstrated from the following examples which were obtained during processing the rich data gathered. The dynamic nature of iterative, exploratory analysis assumed continuous noting of changes that occurred in respondents' cognition as affected by the research process. While some trainee teachers were rather timid in their attempts to make independent judgments

concerning the burning issues approached, others continued their ideational and creative activity in my presence, even when the list of interview questions was exhausted.

Gena<sub>TT</sub> became so interested in exploring the theme of power as linked to English that, upon the official end of the interviewing session, she addressed the topic regarding language as ideology and an agent affecting one's identity. A conversation with Sama<sub>TT</sub> touched upon the issues of language varieties, accents and their effects on one's image and social relationships. Initially, she presented herself as a vigorous critic of the Arabic accent. However, towards the end of our discussion Sama<sub>TT</sub> was willing to accept it as part of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. She became suddenly aware of the beauty of accents and the freshness they could bring to one's identity. A new sense of critical awareness had evolved, even just in our short time talking.

The fact that such complex issues have not been covered by professional teacher training programmes in depth encouraged exploration of the theme. Our discussions alone were already enough to bring noticeable results – I can only imagine what changes could occur with a high quality and relevant course added to the ELT programmes paired with educators who practice the belief that:

In the learning process the only person who really learns is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby re-invents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriate learning to concrete essential situations (Freire, 2008/1974, p. 82).

In support of this view, I would like to give an example here of how some conversations progressed upon turning off the voice recorder, as in the case Noor<sub>TT</sub> who was very persistent about not wanting her future children to learn/speak Arabic. I was very inclined to introduce her to a different perspective by providing some information concerning the importance of the mother tongue and the benefits of being bilingual as opposed to monolingual in this day and age. She was extremely bewildered at learning

the different viewpoints on language and was shocked to see the other side of the coin. She kept on thanking me and saying that everyone who told her to speak in Arabic never got her interested until I mentioned the importance of it and how representing one's native country was important.

Some other trainee teachers like Abeer<sub>TT</sub> addressed (either implicitly or explicitly) the key issue of 'sympathy' towards Arabic thinking that there was no real necessity for the mother tongue except for religious purposes. All of the trainee teachers asked to preserve it, not because they truly believed in its importance as a means of communication and education, but because, if they chose not to use it, they felt 'sorry' for Arabic. They were ready to accept marginalisation of their native tongue, but wished at least to maintain some sort of integrity for it. What they failed to realise was the fact that the problem persisted due to their own permissiveness regarding Anglicisation. We spoke about the fact that there should be no meek 'sympathies' towards the mother tongue but the willingness to acknowledge the drastic neglect of Arabic and to change one's own mode of thinking on the point. As a result of these conversations they began to consider different dimensions to the situation, whereas many of them came to me weeks later and expressed their genuine interest in the matter and how they are already vocalising these issues with their family and friends.

Another controversial issue was answering the question "Who do you think is the best English teacher in Kuwait?" I asked the trainee teachers whether they felt as representing the ideal educator to the Kuwaiti students in government schools. All responses were negative. They unanimously agreed that a native speaker was the ideal. Abeer<sub>TT</sub> remarked: "You know what the problem is, here in the college we feel like everyone is always telling us we're not good enough."

I was involved in many arguments about the supposed impeccable nature of a native speaker when I told them about the hidden but nevertheless important assets that

a non-Anglophone teacher might bring to language learning including awareness of the local culture and experience of second language learning. Those conversations were especially rewarding in a sense that trainee teachers left with a feeling of empowerment they never experienced before. The emotion made a contrast to bearing the label of ‘inadequacy’ and failure to meet any standards. Upon our sincere arguments and discussions they gained a personal boost to their self-esteem that had been either totally unavailable to them during studies or given by very small dosages from one or two lecturers. Such issues should be the motto of the department so that all trainee teachers leave to the real world with the notion that they are capable of doing the job. This sense of empowerment should be made public rather than not spoken about or even discussed.

To conclude, I understood that encouraging the trainee teachers to think about their real environments and begin to question their practices and beliefs was the most appreciated result of all the interviews held. My field experience showed that simply doing the interview was enough for respondents to get a raised sense of awareness in relation to the language, culture, identity, and so on. Many trainee teachers were found later congregating in the hallways talking about the subjects of our interviews and discussing their surprise which showed how eager they were to be challenged; by that confirming Freire’s (2008/1974) notion that “challenge is basic to the constitution of knowledge” (p. 112).

## **Topic II Discussion: The Act of Problematizing**

The following sub-section will look deeper into the data retrieved from surveys and interviews to compare the trends found therein with information from the literature concerning the most critical areas of TESOL teacher development in Kuwait. First, I am going to discuss the concept of English as learnt and practiced by trainee teachers and their lecturers in their institutional settings (as a medium of instruction and a subject). Next, I will address the issue of teacher preparation in Kuwait as manifested on the

planes of objectives, trainee teachers' motivation, and standards.

### **Problematizing: What English do Kuwait's Future Teachers of English Deal with?**

One of my primary goals at constructing the discussion section for Topic 2 included defining the place and status of English in the academic curricula to reveal the implications of current views of English on the teacher preparation programmes. The first problem addressed was the employability and meaningfulness of traditional definitions in my study context. When compiling the literature review section, I have noticed that the majority of researchers writing about Kuwait's educational system from the perspectives of English language learning and teaching utilise the terms EFL/ESL (e. g., Al-Yaseen, 2000; Al-Edwani, 2005; Al-Mutawa, 1997) or 'English for Specific Purposes' ESP (El-Dib, 2004). Until the very last stages of data analysis and the concluding reflections over the results obtained, I found no problems in using the same to contextualise my own inquiry. However, I made several unsuccessful attempts to link the research outcomes, as interpreted using the ESL/EFL conceptual grid, to the most recent writings which call for the development of English as an international or global EIL/GE and discuss the creation as well as support of the local knowledge in the Middle East (e.g., Abi-Mershed, ed., 2010; Sharifian, ed., 2009; Wachob, ed., 2009).

From 2000 to 2005, Al-Yaseen (2000) and Al-Edwani (2005) observed that in KU's colleges specialising in humanitarian studies, English was delivered as a foreign language, while science-oriented programmes comprised it as a second language, and in CBE managed by PAAET English, it was presented as a foreign language. Al-Yaseen (2000) has explained such logic of English language categorisation as based on the social status of the tongue that is reflected in the learning process. The same stream of reasoning is found in the writings of Kachru, devised autonomously (1990, 2004) or in cooperation with Nelson (2001). Furthermore, it is learnt 'consciously', i.e., as an

independent subject within the CBE's and KU's curricula that are defined for those establishments by the Ministry of education. Al-Yaseen (2000) has stressed that, under these circumstances, “motivation becomes an important factor to achieve a good standard of the target language” (p. 28). In other words, Kuwait's ‘non-native’ speakers practice English to excel in studies rather than to use this tongue outside their learning contexts. The lack of “an internal communication function” (Al-Yaseen, 2000, p. 28) on the part of English in Kuwait, i.e., the absence of it in discourses outside the local curricular frameworks, is considered by Al-Yaseen (2000) and Al-Edwani (2005) to be the key evidence of the foreign-language status of English in CBE and some colleges of KU. Although the aforesaid researchers have cautiously hypothesised that, due to the wide-scale expansion of English across all levels of Kuwait’s social life, this tongue may also operate as a second language in the local education system; they have not yet developed this thesis in depth.

These arguments recall the Kachruvian concentric-circles model with its EFL/ESL dichotomy which has been refuted in the most recent generation of research (e.g., Abi-Mershed, ed., 2010; Sharifian, ed., 2009; Wachob, ed., 2009). The alternative, more dynamic, 3D cylindrical three-layer matrices developed by Yano (2009) and supported by Pennycook (2009) (see literature review section) denies one’s fixated belonging to either the Inner, Outer or Expanding circles that is present in Kachru’s construct. Furthermore, due to the reference to economic, social, and political factors contributing to the appropriation, negotiation, or synthesis of English outside the Core Anglophone localities, Yano’s model is able to trace the variability of English across different social strata according to the range (discursive function) and depth (degree of utilisation) and thus to mediate the ‘native-speaker’ problem by allowing greater flexibility for English ‘non-native’ speakers in developing their individual language styles and legitimising English as an international language (see chapter three).

However, the data from the survey and in-depth discourses of trainee teachers and lecturers still reflect the Kachruvian-like typification of English with its problems of identity formation and disproportional distribution of powers. Judging from their responses, Kuwait's future teachers clearly identify themselves as 'non-native' speakers who fail to operate the English language on a level on par with 'native' users. In the previous sections I provided trainee teachers' quotes revealing how the sharp contrast between the socio-linguistic identity of a Kuwaiti English language speaker with an extensive English-learning background and the classical portrait of a 'native speaker' whose English has been acquired as the first childhood language and is characterised by the intuitive and spontaneous elaboration of grammar structures, discourse patterns and lexical items; as well as the creative construction of communicative ranges (Holliday, 2009). To the earnest belief of the majority of trainee teachers, the mastery of the English language is the accidental gift in the case of those born in Anglophone countries or from the Anglophone parents, while in Kuwaiti students' cases any knowledge of the tongue is mostly the product of hard labours based not on spontaneity, fluency, or intuition, but on hard training as well as time- and effort-consuming drilling. The trainee teachers' obsession with grammar deals not only with any objective estimation of their linguistic competencies, but also with the continuous alertness at being tested.

As previously mentioned it was agreed that the curricular at both CBE and KU concentrated on the British/American instructional footprints. Although lecturers eagerly acknowledged the diversity of English as not belonging to UK or USA only, celebration of a departure from the Anglophone hegemony in the professional realm of English language education would seem premature. Judging from participants' discourses, the presence of World Englishes remained a purely theoretical statement so far as little experiences from the countries belonging to the outer and expanding circles were brought into the curricular frames observed.

Student teachers lack of exposure has led them to dubious and uncritical views in regards to issue pertaining to pronunciation and accents. There appear to be two different approaches to the issue of accent among Kuwaiti perspective teachers.

According to Sama<sub>TT</sub>:

The American accent is better than the British. The British are very strict with grammar. The Americans don't mind. They want to understand you.

Bibi<sub>TT</sub> explains her point of view as follows:

I can't understand how anyone can teach English if they are not speaking it with a good accent. We should respect our language and we should respect others. That's my opinion. Even here in our college, I hate when you hear those girls talk like we're not an English department. I want to talk to them but I say, 'It's their fault. They don't want to work hard.' For myself, I respect the language and how you should pronounce it.

In the first case, Sama<sub>TT</sub> has attempted to diversify the Anglophone society into the British and American environments, whereof the former is marked with sternness and exclusiveness, while the latter demonstrates greater tolerance towards deviation from the norm in terms of lexis or pronunciation. The claim for mutual intelligibility as faced by Sama<sub>TT</sub> when communicating with Americans has been appreciated as less harmful for the identity of the Kuwaiti English-language student, although she added that during her stay at her uncle's home in the United States, she practiced the local accent in order not to stand out from the crowd.

In Bibi's<sub>TT</sub> case, there is a complete acceptance of the imagined core standard English accent that coexists with total rejection of any other localized accent. Bibi<sub>TT</sub> has chosen to supplement her non-Anglophone identity with the pseudo-Anglophone and 'pseudo-native' model that is constructed on the basis of her personal beliefs and outward regulations which are borrowed through mass media channels, learning



resources, and communication with peers and lecturers. She eagerly becomes the self-made 'guard' controlling the 'purity' and 'authenticity' of the discourses she meets, while she subconsciously feels herself not 'pure' or 'authentic' enough. Llurda (2005) has mentioned the difficulties experienced by members of any speech community to diversify native and non-native speakers in terms of status. The researcher has acknowledged that the point of controversy is created by the subtle boundary line between native speakers by birthright and those who possess near-native command of the language. In such situations, language identities may become blurred, and complex phenomena of identity-substitution may occur.

In order to trace the roots of such idiosyncratic attitudes towards the English-language varieties other than the American or British, I reviewed the lecturers' responses to find that the two local teacher-training programmes promote the EFL learning model oriented towards the Core-circle practices. Khaild<sub>L</sub> has explicitly stated: "We really make clear to students that they are still studying English as a foreign language, not as a second language or as a first language." He explained the choice of the EFL perspective by the fact that most trainee teacher graduates were not likely to use English outside their professional environments. Given this, the EFL model was constructed according to the standards of English language teaching prevailing in either Great Britain or USA (depending on the instructional policy of the particular institution). English was treated as a solid distinctive variety existing in the inner circle countries (mainly UK or USA), while all other varieties were made invisible for the sake of the standardised educational process.

The term 'standard' is crucial here. Lecturers commonly stressed that graduates should comply with the international standards so far as those of them with appropriate GPAs will continue their studies abroad, mostly in British or North American post-graduate establishments. Taking into account this desired outcome, Khaild<sub>L</sub>

acknowledged his personal and institutional support of Standard English as “a medium of instruction and communication”. Farah<sub>L</sub> provided further detail:

The teacher should be aware of the language and the components of the language – phonetics, morphology, syntax, and grammar. [...] I would suggest that our students focus on learning and studying Standard English. These students in particular are going to be teachers of English. I prefer they use Academic Standard English rather than other Englishes.

The presence of the term “Academic Standard English” in lecturers’ interviews brings along a range of questions and restricts the English language to a single variety which is problematic to describe. Perhaps, Farah<sub>L</sub> meant that the focus should be placed on accuracy and proficiency which were characteristics of the English variety expected in academic educational institutions. From such perspective, the aim should be training teachers in EFL which is a common standard at school level and in tertiary education. The approach disregards the fact that it is extremely challenging to provide the uniform definition for 'standard' English in the light of globalised communication patterns and diversity of the English-language speaking community.

Similarly to Crystal (2003; he uses the term 'World Standard Spoken English'), the supervisors participating in my research regard the Standard English variety as operating in the written and oral modalities for the goals of academic learning and communication. The written code is diversified in regard to using either the British or American spelling rules, while the oral one avoids any nationally biased lexis replacing local idioms by descriptive circumlocutions. Furthermore, similarly to the scholars who coined definitions for the English language before the emergence of the GE concept (e.g., Hughes and Trudgill, 1979; Strevens, 1985; Trudgill, 1984 – in Jenkins, 2003), lecturers view English as a distinctive feature and medium of educated individuals who use it regardless of accents or national/ethnic backgrounds to convey their ideas in a

mutually intelligible and respectful manner. However, unlike Jenkins (2003, after Trudgill, 1999), they stressed the importance of style and register for their Standard English construct. In regard to the former, they encourage trainee teachers to use formal discursive patterns adhering to the upper style of conversation, and in regard to the latter, they require their students to adopt the appropriate professional vocabulary containing lexis from such thematic clusters as applied linguistics, methodology, psychology, literature, cultural studies and such.

I have discovered significant contrasts between the two perspectives of trainee teachers versus lecturers pertaining to Academic Standard English. Lecturers are theoretically eager to welcome the richness and diversity of the worldwide English language varieties as differing in pronunciation and other grammatical or lexical features. Due to participation in professional activities (i.e., conferences, advanced training), they are aware of the recent changes in English language research such as EIL or ELF (English as lingua franca) which legitimise the emergence of English as the flexible medium of communication between various geographical locations and cultural spaces. Strangely, the breakthroughs in the professional conceptual framework, from lecturers' perspectives, are irrelevant to the daily lives of their students.

To support some evidence for this guess, I would like to provide an episode from my conversation with Suad<sub>L</sub>. We talked about GE, and she coined an explanation for the term, defining it as "a language used by people universally." I asked her if trainee teachers of the given department are introduced to the idea, and she expressed doubt in it, adding that they have to concentrate on the basics because of their inadequate command of the tongue. If to utilise the term mentioned by Davies (2003), the lecturers feel themselves comfortable on the position of 'the revisionist foreigner': they are informed about the heterogeneity of contemporary English varieties and do not suffer from the 'inferiority complex' (Llurda, 2009) towards 'native speakers'.

The situation is different with trainee teachers. While lecturers are able to access the most recent research as reference points, their students rarely have a chance to expand their views on the varieties of English, adhering instead to the fossilised code of rules. From this perspective, trainee teachers are required to master the formal variety of English with a strong reliance on the British or North American standards. Unlike their lecturers, trainee teachers mostly stick to the 'traditional foreigner' model (Davies, 2003) which does not rebel against the superiority of 'native speakers'.

In respect to the negotiation between the ideal and mother-tongue, 'non-native', Outer-circle identity, trainee teachers were reminiscent of the Chinese English-language learners who took part in the research described by Li (2009). Both pools consisted of individuals from non-Anglophone backgrounds who earnestly wanted to approach the Standard English 'nativity' in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and fluent command of styles and registers. Both Chinese students from Li's study and those Kuwaiti learners I dealt with faced problems when solving the issue of intelligibility. Treating local deviations from the standard variety as errors and lacking relevant information concerning the Global or World Englishes, my participants did not claim ownership of English through any form of nativisation, hybridisation or critical inquiry. They often expressed guilt and shame (observed also in Mazawi, 2010) or emotional attachment to 'native speakers' (the Stockholm syndrome described by Llorca, 2009) and felt themselves caught between the mother-tongue cultural environment, which they have already departed from, and the English-language 'native' culture, which they are not yet able to own. Additionally, my participants were conscious of the additional burden that was placed on them due to conventions of the teaching profession. The common opinion about English language teachers is that they do not have the right to make any mistakes since they are regarded as models for learners in terms of pronunciation, grammar or any other skills. These high expectations provide another complexity for perspective

professionals who are constrained by their high educational responsibility.

In light of those findings, I find it important to “disinvent English, to demythologise it, and then to look at how a reinvention of English may help us understand more clearly what it is we are dealing with here” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 109). Below I will examine the instruments of disinvention and demythologisation which are lacking now within the existing training framework and which should be provided for students in the future. To approach the issue, I discuss the status of teacher preparation as consisting of objectives, standards for assessment and trainee teachers’ motivation.

### **Problematizing: Which Quality and for Whom?**

Posing the second research question, I asked participants about the implications of current views of English for professional teacher preparation. During the process of data analysis the issue of quality was recurrent and that’s when I became aware of the evasiveness of the very term ‘quality’ as applied to education in general, and as applied to the preparation of English language teachers in particular. Bashshur (2010) has commented on the matter as follows:

“Quality” is something everyone wants, but like beauty, happiness, or health, it is a very relative thing. Without knowing where a country is heading and without understanding the potential as well as the limitations of its educational system, a discussion of quality and standards cannot be fruitful. (p. 260)

Speaking about the state-wide objectives that shape teacher training in Kuwait, they comply with those borrowed by other Middle-Eastern countries from the West as part of the movement for creating knowledgeable societies (UNDP, 2003; Bindé, 2005). In brief, the new ideology is geared to the concept of economic growth as the most important goal of any state and its people that is achieved through acquisition, accumulation, dissemination, utilisation and storage of knowledge. The approach is criticised in the recent body of Arab-centred research on the dependence of Arab

educationalists and policymakers on Western norms and models (Abi-Mershed, 2010), unequal distribution of educational assets among learners (Bashshur, 2010), the negligence for indigenous backgrounds and knowledge models (Brock and Demirdjian, 2010), the monolithic and monocentric model of knowledge processing (Li, 2009), and erroneous treatment of a state as a neutral agency standing apart from power formation and exchange (Mazawi, 2010). There is no evidence that those criticisms have been taken into account in Kuwait's educational settings.

Holliday (2009) has warned that, in cases when the professional communities from the 'Periphery' apply for assistance in strategic planning or policy making from the 'Centre' (i.e., the United States or Great Britain), there is a possibility to obtain affirmative prescriptions rather than efficient guidelines that would take into account indigenous needs and local educational objectives. He warned that, in light of the traditional top-down relationships between Anglophone and non-Anglophone states, "the Center's desire to 'help' is more to do with professional, institutional, political, or cultural self-affirmation than with a profound desire to understand" (p. 23).

Kuwait's teacher training system was formed under the supervision of and with assistance of external bodies located outside the country (Al-Sharaf, 2006), and was formed when foreign consultants were perceived as being more knowledgeable and competent than Kuwaiti academicians or policy makers. Instead of devising the original framework as based on the local concepts and aspirations, an explicit effort was made to borrow the experience and methods from the West.

Importation of external standards and approaches by Kuwaiti policymakers and educationalists in regard to the specifics of training English language teachers has resulted in multiple shortcomings. They are preconditioned by a simplistic treatment of learning as an input-output mechanistic flow (Bashshur, 2010) requiring benchmarking and levelling of students against international standards without reference either to

individual abilities and preferences, nor to the concept of ‘standards’ as established in the process of knowledge scaffolding, nor to customisation of the pace of learning (Bashshur, 2010).

It has been already stated that some English language textbooks which are used in Kuwait are borrowed from the Anglophone countries (UK and USA). Lecturers do not deny the pro-British and pro-American orientation of the training programmes in terms of utilising such textbooks. However, it does not mean that British or US teaching ideologies and methodologies are equally accepted. As I have mentioned above, lecturers and trainee teachers regard those two inner circle countries as sources of instructional materials and the language itself, while the humanistic approach typical for UK or USA is substituted in Kuwait by the top-down hierarchy (i. e. learners are denied any active role in the educational process and are expected to accurately follow teachers’ instructions). The critical element which is also present in the inner circle educational establishments is made invisible in Kuwait where programme elements are not filtered through students’ experiences but taken for granted.

It should be stressed that lecturers consider their students’ poor English language knowledge and communicative skills as the most important problems hindering the efficiency of training. Their opinions are supported by multiple third-party findings (Al-Bustan and Al-Bustan, 2009; Al-Darwish, 2006; Al-Edwani, 2005). I dare to argue, however, that low proficiency of trainee teachers in the core linguistic competencies such as reading, writing, listening and speaking is not the only problem to mediate.

Following Holliday’s (2005) classification, the local curricula fit the category of TESEP (tertiary, secondary, primary state education outside the Inner Circle). The approach is characterised in terms of top-down, formal power relations, teacher-centred methods of classroom work, high-stakes concepts of academic success as measured through tests, and traditional pedagogical models in general. Interviewing trainee

teachers and their lecturers, I have noted that the former regard the latter as indisputable sources of information and powerful makers of the institutional policies, both formal and informal. Holding in mind the state-wide goal of training English language teachers' for primary and secondary school placement, lecturers overlook the value of the learning frameworks from the Inner Circle with their flexibility, learner-centredness and collaboration between the agents of training. Speaking about orientation towards UK or USA, they touch only the surface by relying on textbooks from those countries. Doing such, programme authorities disregard the recent claim concerning expansion of the English language boundaries so that trainee teachers could accept 'non-native' speakers from the non-Anglophone part of the world. Proofs of such hypothesis have been provided above throughout the analysis and discussion section.

Analysis of research data and third-party literature demonstrates the following. First, participating lecturers encourage their students to arrive at the fluent command of Academic Standard English. This message is understood as appropriating the features of 'native speakers' in terms of grammar, morphology, syntax, and phonetics. In the copying of Anglophone educational principles and ideologies, they forget or consciously disregard the following: "[N]one of the goals of ELT is to become an NS" (Llurda, 2009, p. 123). Second, imposition of USA/British standards onto Kuwaiti English language learners results in their blind dependency on any norms in principle which are not processed or filtered in their life-worlds but imposed from outside. Facing the dictate of stringent instructional criteria, trainee teachers feel themselves obliged to follow them, and if they fail to do it, underachievement is claimed to be learners' personal problem. No instructional policies are taken to help those lagging behind except for remedial courses, and they cannot solve the problem to the fullest extent.

Following the guidelines from Kuwait's Ministry of Education and complying with the necessity to rank in line with British or U.S. educational establishments,



teachers deny the rights (to study in their native language of Arabic) of those trainee teachers who fail to achieve the predefined level of competency in English language and related disciplines. Being immersed in the English-medium environment where information is transmitted at quick pace and failing to cope with the required task due to the poor command of the foreign tongue, trainee teachers begin to suffer from lacunas in subject knowledge (in the realms of applied linguistics, methodology, psychology, literature, etc.) from the very beginning, while remedial courses somehow heal trainee teachers' weaknesses in basic language competencies, their deficiencies in the culture of learning and critical thinking cannot be mediated, given the authoritarian, standardised approach of the professional training. Besides students become contaminated by the 'diploma disease' (Mazawi, 2010), which makes them compete for the appropriate GPAs and neglect the goals of spiritual growth, knowledge scaffolding, ethos development and self-construction.

On the other hand, lecturers have the immensely difficult task of preparing not just fluent speakers of English who can use it as an international language for communicative purposes but also the new generation of teachers who should perform at a certain level of competence. Thus, lecturers are responsible for 'producing' competent professionals. In order to cope with the task, they should maintain a specific level for prospective teacher to achieve. The set of formal criteria does not necessarily imply the recently identified reflective competence or the instructional tools "to ensure that prospective teachers have the ability to reflect on their practice and to improve their teaching skills as they teach" (Almodaires, 2009, p. 32). Taking into account the goals of teacher training programmes (reviewed in the Background section), the lack of awareness and critical knowledge among trainee teachers should not be regarded as solely lecturers' guilt.

That said, responses elicited from participants have revealed that they visualise

education and learning as the standardised utilisation of ready-made information. The trend is explained by the ‘native-speakerism’ of Kuwait’s professional curricula so that students become “uncritical victims of the global hegemony of NS-based pedagogic models” (Li, 2009, p. 82). The heavy reliance of local policymakers and educationalists on British and U.S. learning matrices introduces discrimination which, according to Holliday (2009):

...can [...] be traced to a chauvinistic...perception that ‘non-native speaker’ ‘cultures’ lack critical thinking, autonomy, the ability to plan and manage, individuality, and so on, necessary to do the job of successfully carrying an English-speaking Western vision of English across the world. (p. 26)

Suffering from the ‘complex of inferiority’, students do not dare to trespass the limits of their curricula and avoid any references to the issues besides their basic language competencies or elementary class-management techniques. Trainee teachers’ discourses have revealed their unawareness of the matters pertaining to the status of English, language policy making, etc.

Another deficit of teachers’ development, resulting from and accompanying the abovementioned ones, is trainee teachers’ disinterest towards their own local contexts and backgrounds. It is not a secret that any educational process cannot be analysed outside the broader economic, social and political contexts which exist in the given locality. However, most participants demonstrated their inability to expand pre-set boundaries in order to reveal external factors affecting their academic realities. Student teachers frequently made statements of refusal to have anything to do with what they called “political stuff”. They regard language policy making, inter-cultural conflicts or sociolinguistic diversity to be the concerns which are better suited for students outside Kuwait, somewhere in Anglophone states, while Kuwait’s settings, from their perspective, require no critical analysis of those issues. These findings sharply

contradict the recent updates in the field which stress the value of local backgrounds and experiences as processed through critical reflection and orientation towards meaning negotiation. For any programme to be effective, it should “resonate with the culture or cultures of the groups for whom they are provided” (Brock and Demirdjian, 2010, p. 186). When this principle is not taken into account, the discussion of quality becomes futile.

Finally, I would like to comment on the lack of motivation that has been noticed in the pool of trainee teachers in regard to their future profession, which seems to be another consequence of the imbalanced ideology of teacher training in Kuwait as constructed according to the external rules and norms. While I agree with the fact that the problem has existed prior to Anglicisation of the state education system (Al-Sharaf, 2006), I would stress that the existing approaches do not encourage trainee teacher graduates to overcome their fear of real classroom settings. Troudi (2009a) has expressed the anxiety of “whether the enthusiastic teacher was becoming an endangered species” (p. 61). In fact, multiple trainee teachers’ statements address the conscious refusal of the teaching career in local schools both during and after graduating from ELT programmes. In accordance with Troudi’s (2009a) findings, I suspect that such lack of enthusiasm and passion are preconditioned by the totalitarianism of high-stakes efficiency models which are imposed on teachers in their professional institutions. To resolve this problem, Troudi (2009a) suggests departing from formal methods of evaluation in parallel with re-directing social attitudes to teachers from the negative to the positive pole. Al-Sharaf (2006) has acknowledged that in Kuwait there is a tendency to blame teachers for the current educational crisis in the country. However, it is inaccurate to place the blame on those who are in fact additional victims of a broken system.

When participating in training programmes, trainee teachers are taught to trust

the 'native-speaker' professional code. Despite their awareness of their errors and weaknesses, those learners, as previously mentioned, got accustomed to being 'in the club' of English language owners. They are not aware that upon leaving the alma mater they would be treated by their pupils as inferior to teachers from Great Britain, USA, Canada and other countries of the Inner Circle. Moreover, the existing curricula do not prepare them to survive through the painful experience defined by Ali (2009) as 'The Brown Man's burden'. Besides coping with the outcomes of the 'native-speaker fallacy' that is common in Kuwait's educational establishments, upon placement in real classrooms they may leave the profession within the few next years because of the strangle of traditional methods (not to speak about fatigue from routine, the lack of promotional opportunities, and so on) or utilise the same teacher-centred, disempowering, and standardised approach to their young students which they themselves have faced throughout their secondary- and tertiary-level studies.

The issue of teachers' low motivation in terms of enthusiasm and professional knowledge base calls for the integrated treatment on both tactical and strategic levels. Existing research suggests placing the problem-solving activities within the framework of critical pedagogy which Morgan (Ramanathan and Morgan, 2009) has defined as "linking concepts/ideas to concrete practices and settings, particularly those in which theoretically informed graduates must begin to become practically informed professionals, whose transformative voices, as a result, are more likely to be heard by colleagues and supervisors" (p. 163). Putting it differently, trainee teachers must develop the ability to think independently from the imposed authorities which would encourage them to move beyond the frameworks of formal curricula and get introduced to the diversity of ideas and values in the realm of their profession. This task cannot be fulfilled without support from lecturers, institutional authorities and the broader society.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

In this final chapter I present an overall conclusion of the study by reviewing the research implication as related to each of the research questions. I then put forward the contributions and recommendations. I end with an account of my personal research journey.

### **Research Findings and Implications**

My research addressed the recent international efforts to redefine the status of the English language in terms of ideology and functionality in non-Anglophone learning environments. One purpose of the present study was to explore how Kuwaiti future EFL teachers perceived the English language in their social and professional contexts. Second, the research was aimed at investigating the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation programmes in Kuwait designed to prepare the fresh cohort of English language instructors.

Through coding of the information gathered at the survey and interviewing stages, two major topics were identified, presented in Chapter 5. Six themes grouped under Topic 1 ‘The status of English’ described how Kuwaiti future teachers perceived the English language and the associated culture being the integral part of their social and professional activities. Lecturers’ comments added depth and value to the discussion. Another six themes grouped under Topic 2 ‘Professional ELT training from the GE perspective’ tackled participants’ opinions concerning the nature of Kuwait’s teacher training as related to the phenomenon of GE. The sections below will summarise research findings and implications as linked to the two research questions.

### **Question 1: How is English perceived by Kuwait's future English language teachers?**

Student teachers shared generally positive conceptualisations of the English language. They perceived it in the heterogeneity of functions within the Kuwaiti sociocultural environment and specific institutional training frameworks. Overall, English was viewed as the all-purpose *lingua franca*, the valuable tool of communication both inside and outside Kuwait and the medium to contact individuals of various national and linguistic backgrounds.

Within the professional networks of English language teaching professionals English was perceived by both trainee teachers and lecturers as a medium and subject of instruction used for the sake of data search, processing and socialisation. It was most commonly employed when reading professional literature, listening to radio broadcasting, and watching TV. In the educational establishments under research, CBE and KU, discourses pertaining to the departmental activities were commonly conducted in English, and Arabic was used only when lecturers talked about professional issues with each other, or when they had to discuss personally sensitive issues with their students or compensate trainee teachers' lack of professional vocabulary or grammar skills.

Overall, trainee teachers referred to English as the object of emotional attachment, the language of progress and modernity, the instrument for academic studies and professional promotion, and the marker of social prestige, freedom and trendiness.

Some trainee teachers reported about their perception of English as the *lingua emotiva* affecting the emotional plane of their personalities. The positive experience associated with the language was rooted in the respondents' childhood when they learnt English. Mass media such as the internet, TV, music, art or cinematography also

contributed to the positive emotional charging of the English language. The discussion of attitudes to English as constructed within the national system of formal schooling revealed the following. The majority of trainee teachers who had graduated from public establishments stressed that the approaches practiced there were really challenging for the keen emotive immersion into the language. Authoritarian, drill-based teaching methods often made learners study the foreign language for the sake of just passing. My participants suggested that English should be treated as an object and source of positive feelings and pleasure. They argued that the task should be fulfilled through reformation of the existing curricula by allowing greater flexibility into the learning frameworks.

The emotional charge of English produced misbalance of powers displayed by Classical or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA or Fus'ha) and Colloquial Arabic (Amiya). On the one hand, trainee teachers acknowledged the importance of the Kuwaiti dialect learnt as a mother tongue in family contexts prior to school. Despite the slightly higher position of Amiya in comparison to English, few respondents reported using English in family contexts with Arab-speaking monolingual relatives. On the other hand, trainee teachers undervalued Fus'ha in comparison to English regarding the former as a collection of outdated concepts and a code of exuberantly complex rules. Those reactions also helped to interpret the conceptualisations of English as the 'progressive' language.

The respondents associated Arabic with religion, history and local traditions, while English was linked to technology and science. Such attitudes arose under the pressure of several factors including the ideological consequences of the British colonial past in the state, the spread of the Internet and deployment of electronic services which were mostly English-medium, Anglicisation of scientific research and technological documentation, advancements in medicine and engineering observed in Anglophone countries. Conceptualising English as such, future Kuwaiti teachers related a particular

language to the ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity.’ Upon identifying the myth of ‘progressive’ English against the ‘non-progressive’ Arabic, I encouraged research participants to dispel it by reflecting over the potential of the mother tongue. My attempts made many trainee teachers leave the interview sessions with the sharpened awareness of the fact that it was inappropriate to reduce the concept of progress to the linguistic medium used to describe and explain the applicable activities.

Contrastingly to Arabic, the English language was perceived by trainee teachers as an efficient tool which would help speakers in joining a world full of material gains and greater opportunities. Upon searching across the local mass media and reading a few UN reports concerning creation of knowledgeable societies in the Middle East, I found that Kuwait was politically oriented towards Anglophone socioeconomic matrices wherein knowledge was treated as an added value. In accordance with the recent statewide claim to approach knowledge-centered societies in terms of deployment of high technologies and research activities, proliferation of global trade mechanisms and delivery of knowledgeable workforce, English was treated by trainee teachers as a powerful competitive advantage ensuring academic and professional promotion. Several critical issues were associated with the perceived function of English as the *lingua academica*.

First, high presence of English in the local learning environments as a subject or medium of instruction did not precondition adequate linguistic proficiency of learners. Putting it differently, it was difficult for many trainee teachers to use correct English grammar structures, to pick up lexis as appropriate for the specific communicative scenarios, to orient themselves in syntax, and to avoid deviations from Standard English in terms of spelling or pronunciation. Participants explained deficiencies in language mastery by the drawbacks of the national education system. Public schools were more criticised than the private ones for the inability to prepare



knowledgeable and fluent users of English as the foreign tongue.

In parallel with the low level of learners' training in basic English-language skills, trainee teachers self-reported about illiteracy in the mother tongue. I heard many stories about their inability to use Arabic in communications with Arab-speaking monolingual in formal meetings or the failures to pass examinations in Arabic. I also noticed the drastic lack of interest in Arabic literature. Standard Arabic was considered both too complicated in terms of grammar and outdated for serving the needs of the contemporary Kuwaiti society. Contrastingly, English was conceptualised as an important medium of instruction, an unsurpassed instrument to retrieve and process information contained in electronic or hard-copy data depositories, a semantic system unmatched in terms of logic, clarity, flexibility and exhaustiveness.

Second, some trainee teachers commented on the function of English as the *lingua economica* shaping socioeconomic hierarchies within the Kuwaiti community. They regarded English as a signifier of 'prestige' paving the way to better educational and employment opportunities. One's access to English-medium learning assets allowed demonstrating superiority over less 'lucky' individuals. Judging from trainee teachers' words, a Kuwaiti being unable to speak English was often regarded as illiterate and ill-educated. Those common beliefs made many parents send their children to private schools with extensive English-language learning curricula. Reacting to high demand, those establishments increased tuition fees and put various admission barriers in front of the applicants who would become segregated depending on the wealth and social backgrounds of their families. Those from low- and even medium-income social classes had fewer chances to enter prestigious private English-medium schools and, subsequently, the approved colleges or universities. Thus a substantial proportion of Kuwaitis were excluded from the English learning framework. The trend refuted the myth about English as the 'one-for-all' medium and an instrument for promoting

equality and democracy.

The last two implications of English as acknowledged by trainee teachers were associated with ‘freedom’ and ‘trendiness.’ Those attitudes might have arisen in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion (1990/91) when the U.S.-led military coalition ousted the intruders from Kuwait. During the time of Iraqi presence in the state, many nationals fled abroad where they got acquainted with realities of the Western culture with its cult of liberty as a multipartite political system, an emphasis on freedom of speech, women’s rights, etc. Those instances of Kuwait’s history affected conceptualisations of English as the language of the most powerful states promoting democracy and liberty in the Middle-East or refuting local authoritarian regimes. If to name the more recent trends, trainee teachers took into account the following phenomena. First, globalisation introduced changes in power relations. Second, expansion of the Internet (instrumentally and ideologically Anglophone) allowed them to witness firsthand the changes taking place around the world. Finally, softening of state boundaries and popularity of English-medium culture (international news channels, Hollywood megamovies and American talk-shows) moulded English into the ‘cool’ and ‘hip’ language signifying fashion and style.

**Question 2: What do the participants see as the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation?**

English is delivered as a foreign language within the local training programmes since trainee teachers are not expected to use it outside classrooms. Accordingly, they were required to demonstrate knowledge of formal grammar rules, appropriate professional lexis, and confident command of syntactic patterns. According to Wafa<sub>L</sub>, trainee teachers should fluently utilise linguistic structures and appropriate them in specific communicative contexts and aim to producing intelligible messages. She stressed that, complying with orientation towards International English, students did not

have to copy 'native speakers' in terms of pronunciation. Local accents and minor errors could be tolerated ensuring that trainee teachers were able to convey meanings accurately and smoothly. However, that point of view or orientation was clearly not relayed to the students.

Unlike lecturers, trainee teachers were not aware of the difference between English as a second language and English as a foreign language which revealed their reluctance in regards to heterogeneity of relationships between the tongue and its functional applications. Moreover, they failed to produce any meaningful definitions of GE or English as an International language which would be more than descriptive generalizations. Even those trainee teachers who were able to name the key characteristics departing from the ideal of a 'native speaker' produced mixed messages when discussing their desire to acquire British or American accent to become proficient English language speakers. The presence of a strong need to comply with institutional high-stakes standards pertaining to the English language, all participants demonstrated dependency on the 'native-speaker' model as well as heavy reliance on traditional knowledge matrices and language teaching methods as utilised in Anglophone countries.

All research participants agreed that the curricula under investigation focused mainly on American and British imprints, while representations of English as functioning in non-Anglophone countries was non-existent. Lecturers delivered the standardised and fossilised concept of the language as directly linked to Anglophone western communities. The most recent claims concerning expansion of the ideological frameworks for English were disregarded by department staff who explained it by rigidity of institutional schedules and inability of trainee teachers to understand such complex issues. Lecturers aimed at preparing the graduating cohort that would comply with the standards of the Inner circle in terms of grammar and pronunciation. Pursuing

such goal, they discarded the local cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Kuwaiti students and their individual characteristics in terms of language appropriation or tempo of knowledge processing.

On their part, trainee teachers evaluated the quality of their professional curricula as generally low. They would like to increase the level of language training and expand their experiences pertaining to interaction with schoolchildren in real classroom settings. They overemphasised the value of methodology while missing the issues related to the cultures of source and target languages, language policy making and problem solving in multilingual and multicultural environments.

Participants defined teachers' knowledge base as consisting of language competencies, acquaintance with the postulates of applied linguistic and related disciplines, awareness of various methods and techniques in the realm of language learning and teaching, as well as the basics of psychology. Those trainee teachers who were enrolled in the elective course named *Culture Learning* at CBE mentioned cultural awareness. However, they omitted the relevance of their source culture to the EFL teaching profession and concentrated on the Anglophone cultural stratum instead of tracing diversity across various social and linguistic contexts. During their training, trainee teachers were immersed into the Anglophone culture with strong references to British and USA curricula. Subsequently, trainee teachers demonstrated a modest degree of knowledge in the English-language learning experiences from the Outer- and Expanding-circle countries.

Another drawback of Kuwait's teacher training programmes, as formulated by participants, was the lack of the link between tertiary and primary/secondary level educational establishments, given that the majority of trainee teachers upon passing final exams would find placement at local schools. Academic curricula as existing at KU and CBE at the moment of my study failed to prepare motivated educationalists

who would not worry about disorganisation in classrooms, disobedience of children, obsolescence of methods, and indolence of school administrators. Student teachers and their lecturers lamented about poor motivation of the beginning teachers who were likely to leave the profession in the face of multiple challenges. They suggested that professional networks should be organised involving representatives of schools and professional institutions. The most important goals of those collaborative efforts would be deeper immersion of trainee teachers into local classroom cultures, better training of novice instructors in classroom management and actual subject delivery, facilitation of trainee teachers' transitions between the stages of the professional pipeline. Lecturers additionally proposed contacting schools where programme graduates would undertake internship in order to proactively clarify objectives and methods of training for the targeted learning environments.

When I discussed the current state of teacher training, trainee teachers demonstrated weak critical thinking skills and preferred to rely on the opinion of authorities. They confessed that earning grades and fulfilling strict curricular requirements left them neither time nor energy to clarify sensitive issues with supervisors or between each other. I understood that research participants were put under continuous stress in the face of the statewide policy aimed at efficiency and accountability of the national education system. The learning process was treated as an input-output activity where proficiency was measured against demanding standards copied from the Inner Circle. No references to trainee teachers' personal backgrounds or professional motivations were made. Neither were there attempts to introduce local backgrounds to curricula in order to support the claim for heterogeneity and flexibility in the age of International English.

## **Research Contribution and Recommendations**

In an attempt to broaden the knowledge concerning the teaching and learning of the English language, I believe that this study provides major contributions to the field, in both the general framework of the study and the value and necessity of the ‘bottom-up’ approach to data collection, processing and dissemination.

In analyzing the phenomenon of GE outside the core circle, I specifically ensured the inclusion of not only foreign schools of thought and modules but tried to bridge the gap by scouring local research in an attempt to paint a more comprehensive picture which reflects the phenomena from both perspectives. The marriage between the global and local, I believe, not only enriched the study, but also gave it credibility and strength. This comprehensive gathering and synthesizing of all existing modules and theories led me to conclude that some of the existing literature on these topics is not always applicable if not placed within the immediate local context, taking into consideration the role of culture, local knowledge, and personal choices. It became clear to me that the content of the literature would not apply uniformly and unambiguously to my context and research sites, making it critically important to use the available theories on English language teaching and teacher training as supportive sources of information rather than prescriptive guidelines. Subsequently, my study was informed more by the data collected than existing theories, leading me to the second major contribution of this study – the ‘bottom-up’ approach of selecting student-teachers as my main source of information.

By valuing the voice of teachers within the framework of this study, I was able to use their ideas and perspectives to inform the research in a way no other established theories could provide. Therefore, I would recommend bringing to the forefront the opinions of practitioners, which may illuminate and inform theoretical perspectives on ELT outside the inner circle as well as teacher preparation curricula. The experiences of

those who teach may reveal important and efficient methods of English language delivery which may hold relevance for the GE trend.

More research should be focused on encouraging the emergence of inter-institutional professional collectives. The aim of this would be problem-solving and policy-making with the help of diverse stakeholders, such as future and practicing teachers, programme administrators, schoolchildren and their parents, members of local communities, and employers from various realms of the state job market. As such, my research included future English-language teachers who were about to enter the professional pipeline. I would suggest contacting these same novice instructors again during their first few years of school placement to reveal further factors that would affect their motivation and competencies. It would also be useful to contact school administrators to discuss possible remediation strategies that would retain new teachers in the profession.

When policies are framed and practices are implemented by governments in isolation without taking into account how teachers and students lives are impacted, those policies and practices cannot be trusted to perform as wished. It is thus imprudent for TESOL professionals to be kept out of educational policy-making (Nunan, 2003). Teachers act not only as conductors of ‘petrified’ knowledge but also as active and critically-minded researchers who have the power to hugely impact the world view and thinking skills of their students. In their fluid role between competing cultures and theories, they guide themselves, using the “road map” referred to by Kumaravadivelu (2007) in order to understand the “global cultural consciousness” that affects their students’ daily lives (p.7). Teachers need better support and guidance in this journey, such that they will be able to accomplish it well and not get lost along the way. They must be able to maintain a meta-sense of the ever-changing global cultural

consciousness, evolve with it, and be able to continuously infuse their classroom work with this sensibility.

From my research, I can confirm that the involvement of trainee teachers could enrich the existing body of literature, which lacked studies about English language teaching in Kuwait paired with the issues of globalisation, international English, the future of English in the Kuwaiti sociolinguistic context, and the dialogue between source (Arabic) and target (English) cultures. Taking this into account, I would suggest evaluating the local frameworks in terms of stakeholders' needs and aspirations.

Searching through the available literature, I found that many problems in the existing instructional practices of various primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level establishments were rooted in the low quality of teachers' training. It would be logical to remediate the gaps in the instructors' knowledge base in the beginning of their careers during initial preparation. Therefore, a thorough assessment of the professional curricula at KU and CBE would be highly needed.

It became evident during the development of the present research that Kuwait's ELT educational authorities relied heavily on guidelines and recommendations provided by experts from Great Britain and the USA, as well as various international organisations and committees. The most recent example was the recruitment of Tony Blair Associates, a company headed by the former British prime minister, to draw the strategic development plan for Kuwait (Pierce & Rayner, 2009; Saeid, 2009). One section of the document was dedicated to the status of the local educational system and its desired objectives within the next few decades. Unfortunately, the report – issued in late 2009 – was unavailable when I completed the write-up stage of my study. I would suggest examining policy statements issued by foreign organisations on the theme of education to identify the current educational ideologies and amend them in compliance with recent critical advancements in language theories and practices.



Taking this into account, I would also recommend that Kuwait's educational authorities trust local experts, rather than non-judgmentally following imported teaching/learning models, which can work within the main principles of cultural imperialism and could be too impactful on Kuwaiti local culture. I would propose that Kuwait's authorities enroll local theorists and practitioners to modify those external guidelines according to the specifics of the country and its educational stakeholders. It is important to appreciate local diverse backgrounds and to filter borrowed guidelines and claims through the indigenous system of values in order to preserve the balance between the ideational frameworks of the country and that of foreign nations. To this end, the notion of 'quality' as applied to the training of Kuwait's teachers should be expanded to include the issues of intercultural dialogue, educational ethics, language policy-making and critical reflection.

In addition, I would recommend synthesising macro- and micro-scales when evaluating the state of Kuwait's teacher training system. On the one hand, quantitative research enrolling large populations would help to track major trends in the area and identify possible cause-effect relationships between phenomena. On the other hand, the inclusion of personal stories and discourses would help in penetrating below the surface and identifying problem-solving strategies and meaning negotiation. A micro-approach to assessing the needs of Kuwaiti EFL teacher training would enrich the culture of inquiry and improve the ethos of research.

As I emphasised in Chapter 1, my investigation was futuristic in nature in the sense that it attempted to project possible scenarios of English language teaching and teacher training in Kuwait. The data collected and analysed suggests that future teachers of English should be aware of the situation pertaining to GE and its effects on educational stakeholders across the world. Being informed of the potential positive features and contradictions of the GE phenomenon brought down to the microcosm of

their classrooms could have many benefits including raising teachers' professional self-esteem with regard to feeling competent and capable to manage their students' English language learning with an informed awareness of the global context, thereby improving overall professional performance. Being guided by third party research and my own investigation, I strongly believe it is time for our future teachers to be prepared in such a way that they become not only able to think critically but to trust themselves and act as experts who possess valuable knowledge to shape the future of their country and the coming generations. Distilling in them what Freire (2008/1974) refers to as "critical hope" where they genuinely believe that they "can make and remake things, that they can transform the world" (p.129).

The last issue I will comment on is the future of Arabic, which has been a critical element of discussion throughout the research process. Although Arabic, in its colloquial versions, clearly faces no threat in terms of usage and growth, the use of Classical Arabic raises concern. It is deemed that the preservation of Classical Arabic as a main source of literacy and as the language of academia is currently in jeopardy. Through my findings, it became apparent that this is not merely a result of the aftermath of English expansion. Judging from trainee teachers' responses, the main reason for their reluctance toward Classical Arabic can be traced to the out-of-date methodology for language delivery being used in primary and secondary educational establishments. I would recommend inviting Kuwaiti educational theorists and practitioners of Arab language teaching to discuss new methodologies which would increase learners' interest and motivation. I would also propose supporting local and/or international organisations promoting Arabic literacy and appreciation of Arabic culture, traditions, and historical/global importance.

## **My Personal Research Journey**

The designing, researching, and drafting of this thesis was not only an academic endeavor, but an expansive personal journey and transformation. This concluding section describes my journey, and the effect its pursuit has had on my research focus and interests.

During my first year of study, I found myself being continuously challenged with thought-provoking concepts by my supervisor. The questions he asked and the subtle remarks he made both intrigued and compelled me. We would have lengthy debates discussing the realities of the Arab world, the future of both English and Arabic and what makes a good English teacher. The conversations I would have with him, fascinated me and made me ponder for days to come. At that point in time, I realised that I will not pursue my post-graduate studies in any topic other than one fueled with this type of politicised energy!

So I embarked on reading a wide range of literature. Guided by my supervisor I cultivated the critical thinking skills necessary for this exploration. I was encouraged to diversify my readings and look for sources closer to home. Looking back, I can proudly say that I was glad to be able to cover a wealth of local investigations into this topic, and to be introduced to great thinkers from around the Middle East. I was able to enrich my own study with their views, and thereby to include a balanced perspective on English in the Arab-speaking countries.

Over the course of processing and filtering through the existing research on the issues of globalisation, the relationships between language and culture, instructional policy, linguistic and educational rights, and so on – I was very excited to begin noticing a shift in my own life– with my newfound knowledge I started applying the theories and data I was learning to my day to day context as a teacher, a parent and a member of the community I live and work in. I found myself wanting to turn back to the

teaching context and start working on changing the status quo.

The idea of empowering and motivating young minds and posing questions to them that encouraged brainstorming and independent, original, and creative thinking on their part was inspiring. Soon after, my research became the topic of everyday conversations with my family and friends. Everyone wanted to talk about it and share their opinion. It is so interesting to be involved in such a subject which is so close to the heart of the community. I enjoyed challenging them with uneasy questions about the intricacies of instructional policies of ELT and projected futures for English and Arabic in the Kuwaiti context. This brought about debates of great interest, all of which continued to help me expand my community knowledge base and theoretical framework.

Most recently in the process, I realised the importance and pleasure of living out my research. Given the fact that the issues of language and education are regular household topics, not a single day goes by without touching upon these issues when having coffee with friends, during family gatherings, or in conversations with colleagues. It was a pleasure for me to work on such current and relevant issues, not to mention the huge positive effect my research has had on my interactions with students and fellow lecturers alike. Going forward, I hope that my study will help to illuminate the complex issues of identity, language appropriation, and the future of both English and Arabic in Kuwait.

## Appendix A

### Letter of Introduction

Dear Research Participant,

As a doctoral student in the field of education at the University of Exeter, I am interested in your perceptions in regards to the status of English and the way it is manifested in the Teacher Education Department. As part of my study, I am conducting interviews with trainee teachers and their lecturers. Your professional experience and personal engagement will provide a highly valuable contribution to my research which is aimed at identifying various attitudes towards the English language and teaching force training. The present letter signifies that I will be contacting you to request an in-depth personal interview related to the issues of English language teaching, Arabic literacy, and teacher knowledge base. The interviewing session with you will last a little under an hour.

By participating in this study, you will be contributing to a better understanding of what English and Arabic languages mean for Kuwaiti future teachers. The outcomes of this research have the potential to inform language learning/teaching programmes and practices in Kuwait designed to increase the level of literacies both in the mother tongue and the foreign language. This study could also benefit the stakeholders of the national education system by improving the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, this investigation will help professionals to form an actively functioning network where challenges are discussed and interventions are deployed.

I am requesting your participation in this study by sending me a letter that outlines your availability during the month of May. Your contribution only requires the completion of the enclosed informed consent form and about 45-60 minutes of your time for an in-depth personal interview. I will contact you by telephone and/or email in the next two weeks to confirm an interview time and location.

Your opinions and perceptions are extremely important to the completion of this research. I would greatly appreciate your consideration and support of this project. If you should need to contact me for any reason, please do not hesitate to do so. I can be reached at [REDACTED]. I hope this topic is of interest to you and that you will consider participating. Each participant will receive a copy of the findings of this research, if desired, upon request. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Respectfully,

Reem Al-Rubaie

*Currently 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD Candidate  
MSc University of Exeter  
MA Boston University*

## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent Form**

Future Teachers, Future Perspectives

The Story of English in Kuwait

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#### ***Purpose***

You are invited to participate in the research project that is aimed at answering the following questions:

1. How is English perceived by Kuwait's future English language teachers?
2. What do the participants see as the implications of current views of English for teacher preparation?

A qualitative multi-method research design will be employed for this descriptive, exploratory study with an element of criticality. To specify, a questionnaire and personal interviews will serve as the basic methods of data collection.

#### ***Benefits and Risks***

There are no foreseeable risks expected if you choose to participate in this study. Contribution to the project will allow you to reflect on your own opinions related to English/Arabic teaching in Kuwait as well as to teacher professionalization. Participation may not have any real personal benefit. However, your sincere and exhaustive answers will benefit teaching and learning by advancing our knowledge and understanding of critical points. The results of this research will be presented as part of my doctoral dissertation.

#### ***Participation and Confidentiality***

As a participant of this study, you will be asked to take part in a personal interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Your privacy will be protected throughout the study. Only myself will have access to consent forms, audiotapes, and the transcripts. Data will be stored in my personal office. Materials from this study will be maintained for a period of three years upon completion. After this period, the data will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty at any time. If you withdraw from this study, your data will be returned to you or destroyed for your protection. As a participant of this study, you may be sure that your identity will be kept confidential unless you specifically provide your written permission to do otherwise.

### ***Contact***

If you have questions at any point throughout the study, or you experience any adverse effects as a result of your participation, please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]. Feel free to contact me as well if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

### ***Consent***

I have read and understood the abovementioned information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Date

---

Participant Signature

**Appendix C**  
**Questionnaire**

Dear Future Teachers,

I would be very grateful if you would take part in this short questionnaire. It is part of a study to investigate your perceptions in relation to the status of the English language.

Please note that your lecturers will not view your answers and all the information provided will be treated in strictest confidence.

Your participation is voluntary and you can choose not to take part. However, your decision to participate will not only help me in my research but also provide you, as future teachers, with ultimately important information.

Thank you,

Reem Al-Rubaie



**PART 1: About Yourself**

1. Are you currently registered or have completed an English learning course?

Yes

No

2. What type of school did you attend?

government

private – English

private – Arabic

3. When did you start learning English?

pre-school

primary

secondary

4. What language do you use when speaking to your parents?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

5. What language do you use when speaking to your sisters/brothers?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

6. What language do you use when speaking to your friends?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

7. What language do you use when speaking to your (cooks, drivers, etc.)?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

8. What language do you use when speaking to your teachers outside the classroom?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

9. In what language do you prefer to read magazines and books?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

10. In what language do you prefer to watch TV?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

11. In what language do you prefer to listen to the radio/music?

only Arabic

only English

both equally

both but more Arabic

both but more English

In the near future, I will be expanding on this research and may wish to get in touch with you for further information. I thank you in advance for your cooperation and assure you that all data will be treated as confidential.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART 2:** About your perceptions towards the status of the English language and your teacher training programme.

Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the statements below by ticking the appropriate box. 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'not sure', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'

12. English is the global/international language.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

13. English is popular because the countries where it is spoken as a first language are powerful.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

14. English is popular all over the world because it is the language of technology.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

15. English is important because it helps travelling abroad.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

16. English is important because it helps find better job placement.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

17. All Kuwaitis should learn to speak English.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

18. A good speaker of English is one who can speak with an American or British accent.

strongly agree

agree

not sure

disagree

strongly disagree

19. The English language is putting other languages of the world in danger.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
20. A good speaker of English is one who is aware of the English language culture.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
21. Kuwait's Arabic culture is not affected by the English language culture.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
22. Nowadays, it is more important to learn English than Standard Arabic (*fus'ha*).  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
23. More and more Kuwaitis will want to learn English in the years to come.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
24. Teaching children American/British culture will make the English language easier for them to understand.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
25. Teaching children English in pre-school before they enter 1<sup>st</sup> grade is an advantage for their learning experience.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
26. Kuwaitis' knowledge of standard Arabic (*fus'ha*) is decreasing because English is getting more popular.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
27. English is the language of technology and business while Arabic is the language of religion and traditions.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
28. Kuwaitis who speak English fluently are considered more educated.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree
29. It is more important to speak *Kuwaiti* Arabic than English.  
strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

30. It is important for me to understand how others in the world are dealing with the English language in their countries.

strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

31. It is important for me to take a course during my teacher preparation about the English language culture.

strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

32. Students being prepared to teach English should study *all* their courses at the college in English.

strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

33. It is important for me to understand how English influences other languages.

strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

34. It is important for me to learn techniques to teach English without affecting the Arabic culture.

strongly agree      agree      not sure      disagree      strongly disagree

**WAIT!**

I am very interested in your feedback. Would you like to add anything?

Please write down any comments you have in the space provided. Thanks for your contribution.

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## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Question Probes**

1. What comes to your mind when you hear (global/ international) English?
2. How important is the English language for Kuwaitis? (i.e. prompts finding a job, further education, prestige, travel etc.)
3. What about for you? What does English mean to you personally?
4. Is there any difference between English as a foreign language and English as a second language?
5. Would you call English being practiced in Kuwait a foreign or a second language?
6. Do you think students in schools should have a choice of whether they want to learn English or not? Why?
7. Do you think at university level students should have a choice of whether they want to study their major in English or Arabic? Why?
8. How do you see the future of English in Kuwait? (i.e. prompts will it increase in schools, everyday life, university, media etc.)
9. Do you think that Arabic is being affected by English? How?
10. In Education do you think there is a balance between English and Arabic? How?
11. When you hear the term “English culture” what countries come to your mind?
12. Are these the countries which are represented in your English program?
13. Do you think it’s possible to teach a language without its culture? For example French without making reference to France or Chinese without making reference to China. Yes/No Why?
14. Have you been introduced in your courses to examples from other countries on how they deal with English as a second or foreign language? If yes/ which countries? If not/ would you be interested to know? Do you think it’s important?
15. Have you been introduced in your courses to examples of the relationship between English and Arabic cultures and how they affect each other? If yes/ how? If not/ would you be interested to know? Do you think it’s important?
16. As an English teacher in what language do you think you should learn teaching methodologies? Why?

17. Do you think it's useful to learn English language teaching methods from countries that teach it as a second language? Why? Would you like that to be added to your training program?
18. Is there any mention of the politics of language in your program? Yes/ What? No/ Would you like to learn about it? Do you think it's useful for you as an English Teacher?
19. What other things do you think are important for you as a future teacher which are not available in the program?
20. Are there any courses available in the program which you think are not useful for you as a future teacher?

## Appendix E

### Example of NVivo Coding Report

NB Technical reasons prevented the original NVivo reports being inserted.

<p>Interview with <i>TT 12</i> Arrival 10 minutes early. Room 1<sup>st</sup> floor on campus. <i>TT 12</i> entered the classroom smiling and eager. I briefly restated the goals of research and stressed that our conversation should not be regarded as a formal test. It was a talk between two people who were both interested in the issues related to English and teacher professional education. Then I started asking my questions.</p>	<p><b>Participation and Access</b></p>
<p><i>Me</i>: How important do you think the English language is?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: Nowadays, English is very important because it's really an international language. If you go to any country where English isn't their language, it fixes everything. You can deal with them in English. It's a common language. You have to know English so you can communicate.</p>	<p><b>Memo</b>: Answers to this question contributed to Importance of English for Kuwaitis and Contexts of Using English vs. Arabic – “A Secret Language”</p> <p><b>Memo</b>: Asking this question I was prepared to hear about the spheres/goals of English language usage – e.g. English is used for traveling, studies, etc. However, the most part of students and lecturers answered this question naming English an international language. <i>TT 12</i> was not an exclusion.</p> <p><b>Coding</b>: English as GE/EIL</p> <p><b>Memo</b>: the concept of EIL was present when designing the questionnaire since it was widely discussed in the professional literature. I included it to check if students are aware of its importance. In the interviews I was interested to elicit personal understanding of EIL.</p>
<p><i>Me</i>: What does it mean personally for you? Why do you use English?</p>	<p><b>Memo</b>: Answers to this question contributed to Importance of English for Kuwaitis and Contexts of Using English vs. Arabic – “A Secret Language”.</p> <p><b>Memo</b>: In this very case, <i>TT 12's</i> answers altogether with other participants' similar</p>

<p><i>TT 12:</i> It's become a common language. Sometimes if I don't understand new words in English, I feel embarrassed. I've learned English since the very beginning of primary school. I wasn't that good at all. In the Arabic word, you say, "this is the public schools" speaking, very different and sometimes not clear.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> The pronunciation was different.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> The pronunciation and the vocabulary were different at school from here or even what we see on TV. I didn't get the vocabulary at all. You have to know something you've learned. How could you spent this whole time learning English and you don't understand what's going on? I have a lot of friends who have spent a long time like me but are still confused in simple situations we try to take any chance to speak, like we say "There is something. Speak in English." Personally, that's why I'm going to improve my English.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> You speak with your friends in English to improve it.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Sometimes, yes. Or where else will I get better?</p>	<p>responses helped to formulate: English in the Educational Context and Theme; Level of ELT in Kuwait – Panic and Frustration.</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Command of English, Level of English language teaching in schools, Problems in pronunciation and vocabulary, Level of English language teaching in Kuwait, Personal motives for English learning The fear of speaking English because of poor command</p> <p><b><u>Memo:</u></b> <i>TT 12</i> answers indicated what Kuwaiti English language learners are scared of. The trainee teachers' self-perceptions as being poor in pronunciation and vocabulary, unable to follow the English-medium instruction at tertiary institutions helped me to address the issue of English language instruction in Kuwait at various levels of the educational system.</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Contexts of using English</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> OK let's move on, do you think there's a difference between a foreign language and a second language?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Yes, I do. I'm going to say that English is a second language everywhere.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> You consider it a second language?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I consider it totally as a second language. Actually, in general, it's a foreign language, but officially it's a second language. Anyway any language can be foreign or second but English I'm sure its second because a foreign language would be one that very little people are aware of but its second because everyone knows it, even if they can't speak it very well.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> English as a foreign and second language</p> <p><b><u>Memo:</u></b> students' ability to differentiate between English as a foreign and second language was addressed in Presentation of English in the Teacher Education Curriculum. Judging from <i>TT 12's</i> answers, the awareness of these issues on the part of teacher students indicate the quality of their preparation and the general understanding of the role of English in their country.</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> Do you think students in schools should be given the choice of whether they want to learn English or not?</p>	<p><b><u>Memo:</u></b> Including this question to the interview protocol, I meant to find out whether learners' attitudes towards English in comparison to Arabic matter in forming the language instructional policy in Kuwait. Answers to this question contributed to: Impact of English on Arabic – Issues of Power and Identity,</p>



<p><i>TT 12:</i> No, I don't think so. It's not English itself. It's the importance of the common language. It was Latin before, and English replaced it. They had to learn Latin because it was the international language.</p> <p>It's the government's responsibility to give us this information. Children have to know. We have to improve our society. We have to be the best and give something to our society. They need enough knowledge. They have to learn the international language.</p>	<p>Projected Futures for English and Arabic: Is There a Balance?, Presentation of English in the Teacher Education Curriculum (English as a medium of instruction), Policy of English as a Language of Instruction.</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Choice to learn English in schools, English as a language of instruction, English as an international language</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> What about at university level? Do you think students should be given a choice to study their major subjects in English or Arabic?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It depends. In medical school and engineering school, I think they should be in English. As they say in Arabic, we're not a developed country. Everything is from America and Britain. The new things they have to know in English. It's the common language. Sometimes it's okay to learn the general subjects in Arabic.</p>	<p><b>Memo:</b> Continuation of a discussion concerning the role of English as a language of instruction in tertiary education.</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Choice to learn English at university, English as a language of instruction, English and technology/progress, The balance between English and Arabic</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> The general subjects are okay to be in Arabic, but the major subjects should be in English.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Yes. We cannot forget our language. We should take care of it. Sometimes we need to go in English or in Arabic. It depends.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> The balance between English and Arabic, Not forgetting Arabic</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> How do you see the future of English?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's going to be the same. It will be the common language in most of the world. Some people will forget about Arabic and will talk in English even in their homes. I've seen those people. Even if their parents don't speak English, they forget about Arabic and keep talking in English. If it's still this powerful in Britain and America, it's going to spread all over the world.</p>	<p><b>Memo:</b> Projected Futures for English and Arabic: Is There a Balance?</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> The future of English, Not forgetting Arabic, The balance between English and Arabic, English as an international language</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> You think Arabic is being affected by English.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Yes, as I said some people are choosing even at their homes to not speak in Arabic.</p>	<p><b>Memo:</b> Impact of English on Arabic – Issues of Power and Identity</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Impact of English on Arabic</p>

<p><i>Me:</i> Do you think in education there is a balance between Arabic and English?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> No, I don't. In public schools, they don't really care about English. It's a major subject, but they don't really care about pronunciation and spelling. It's just a subject you have to pass. You have to get marks in that to pass. Everything is in Arabic. They care about grammar in Arabic. In private English schools, they don't even care about Arabic.</p> <p>There's no balance at all in either school. In public, they care about Arabic and forget about English, and in private, they care about English and forget totally about Arabic.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> How can we solve that?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's the government's responsibility. We should know more than enough in the Arabic language because it's our own language. We should feel proud of Arabic.</p> <p>In English, we should learn. It's a common language. If you go to India, you don't speak in Arabic. You speak in English. We have to care more about spelling and pronunciation. In the English schools, we should care more about the Quran and grammar.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Impact of English on Arabic, Level of English language teaching in Kuwait's schools, Level of Arabic language teaching in Kuwait's schools, The balance between English and Arabic, English as a language of instruction</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Who should care about the level of Arabic language teaching, Feeling proud of Arabic, Difference between English- and Arabic-medium instruction in Kuwaiti educational establishments</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> Now tell me, when I say "global" or "international" English, what comes to your mind? What do you think of?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I think about America.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> English as a global language</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> You think about America. When I say "English culture," what do you think of?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I think of the United Kingdom, of course.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> For culture you think of the United Kingdom?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Yes. The British gave the world the English culture. They made them more advanced and showed the world things like etiquette and all. Like afternoon tea, you see, that's culture.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> Do you think it's possible to teach a language without the culture?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> No. The culture is what makes the language an international language. They have a culture and civilization. There are things I've done in my society. I've become an international. There's a culture. You can't just come like that.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> The link between language and culture</p>

<p><i>Me</i>: What culture do you think is the best culture to teach English?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: Of course the British culture.</p>	
<p><i>Me</i>: Is this the culture mainly represented here in the program?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: I think it's mainly British.</p>	<p><b>Memo</b>: In the previous section <i>TT 12</i> talks about the link between language and culture in general. Here I am trying to find out how this link is represented in teacher education programmes. Answers to the direct question about representation of culture in teacher training contribute to Theme: Culture in Language Teacher Education.</p>
<p><i>Me</i>: Do you think it would be interesting to see how other countries are learning English and learn from them, not from Britain or America?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: We'd learn how they're learning English? Yes. I really like teaching methods, development, and how to improve teaching methods. Children now or in the future have changed. They think more quickly. Developing teaching methods is very important.</p> <p><i>Me</i>: We usually take our teaching methods from America or Britain. Do you think it would be interesting to take teaching methods from other countries?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: It depends on which countries.</p> <p><i>Me</i>: Like what?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: You can't go with other Arabic countries. They teach the same, just with differences in evaluation. We should go to the best, which is a higher level than us.</p> <p><i>Me</i>: What is the best?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: As everyone knows, it's either American or British teaching methods.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b></p> <p>English language teaching experience from other countries besides USA and Great Britain, 'Native-speakerism', The choice of methods for teaching English in Kuwait</p>
<p><i>Me</i>: Is there a mention of the relationship between English culture and Arabic culture here in your program?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: No, I haven't seen that.</p> <p><i>Me</i>: Do you think it's important to understand the relationship and how they affect each other?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: The only relationship we learned about was the invasions. Britain came to invade Egypt, and France came to invade Morocco. This is the only relationship we learned. It's important to know.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b></p> <p>The link between source/target languages and cultures, Representation of the link between language and culture in teacher training programmes</p>
<p><i>Me</i>: Have you heard of the term "politics of language"? Have you come across that here in your program?</p> <p><i>TT 12</i>: No.</p>	

<p><i>Me:</i> Politics of language is usually how countries have policies to protect the mother tongue while integrating a foreign language or second language. Do you think that's interesting to study and know about?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's interesting to study about. We should know how they protect the mother tongue. I don't agree with the term "politics of language" not everything should be political and have struggle.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> How?</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Politics of language instruction, The balance between English and Arabic, Quality of teacher training, Protection of the mother tongue</p>
<p><i>TT 12:</i> I like the flexible language. It's a theory I just got after studying the history of language. I like this changeable language because we make it easy. The Arabic language is so hard. The grammar is difficult. We stay away from it because it's difficult.</p> <p>Old English has similar grammar to Arabic, but it's developed. It's become easier and more flexible. People speak English easier. They forgot about the mother tongue and the hard grammar. They had a word for "female" and "male" like &lt;Arabic 13:04&gt;, but now they have "you." That's it. That makes the language much easier.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> Don't you think it makes the language much more expressive to have &lt;Arabic 13:17&gt; where we differentiate between them?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> No.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> Do you think that's bad?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I think it's just too many words. One word is enough.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> There are too many words in Arabic?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> Yes.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> The balance between English and Arabic, The statuses of English and Arabic (in terms of prestige, complexity)</p> <p><b>Memo:</b> This is interesting how <i>TT 12</i> rates English and Arabic in terms of fitness to the modern style of life. She thinks that Arabic is too complicated and therefore cannot be used as widely as English.</p>
<p><i>Me:</i> What do you think is really important for you to be prepared to be a future teacher in the program? What would be important courses for you?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's hard to deal with our children. I've just taken a course, and it's like the children are angels. They listen and appreciate. When you go in with the real-life children, they're rude. They're difficult to control. As a teacher, I need to know how to deal with those children.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> Are there any courses you're taking in the English department which you feel are not useful or there's no need for?</p>	<p><b>Memo:</b> This is the beginning of the second part of the interview asking about teacher preparation.</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Subjects/disciplines important for English language teachers</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Subjects/disciplines unimportant for English language teachers</p>

<p><i>TT 12:</i> I think literature and sociolinguistics aren't needed.</p>	
<p><i>Me:</i> Do you feel that as an English teacher you should take all of your courses in the college in English, or is it okay to have some in Arabic?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's okay to have the general subjects in Arabic, but our major subjects should be in English.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> You wouldn't want to have the general subjects in English?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> No, I wouldn't.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> Why?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I love my Arabic. I don't want to forget about my Arabic.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> The reason you want to do them in Arabic is just so that you don't forget Arabic?</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> It's not to humiliate Arabic itself. We can't forget about it. I spent four years not studying anything in Arabic.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> I see.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> I don't want to do that. Of course, as an English teacher, taking the courses in English is smart, but something must be done to keep the dignity of Arabic. You know I can use it in daily life, but Arabic is more than this. It has a higher position. It deserves to be taught in a major.</p> <p><i>Me:</i> There is a major in Arabic.</p> <p><i>TT 12:</i> My major is English, but there has to be Arabic involved. Like I said, I don't want to humiliate Arabic. I don't want to make it nothing.</p>	<p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Best language of instruction for teacher training programmes</p> <p><b><u>Coding:</u></b> Love for Arabic, Not forgetting Arabic, Humiliation of the mother tongue under the pressure of English</p> <p><b><u>Memo:</u></b> This conversation raised a key issue and that is "sympathy" towards Arabic. If the other interviews are looked at the same theme is most likely to emerge. Most of the interviewed girls thought that there was no real necessity for Arabic other than the mention of using it for religion. And all of them asked to preserve it not because they truly believe in its importance as a language of communication and education but because if they chose not to they feel "sorry" for the language and hence try to think of ways although marginalized but to at least try to maintain some sort of integrity for it. What they don't realize is what they are thinking is the essence of the problem and that the core use of the language is what is more important.</p>
	<p><b>End of excerpt.</b></p>

## Appendix F

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

### Certificate of ethical research approval

#### STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

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**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).  
**DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

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Your name: Reem Al-Rubaie

Your student no: 560022442

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD/Education

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Salah Troudi

Your email address: [rs240@ex.ac.uk](mailto:rs240@ex.ac.uk)

Tel: 01392 660064

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Title of your project: A Futuristic Projection of ELT Policy in Kuwait

#### Brief description of your research project:

The research investigates how the argument on English language expansion, globalisation, language policy and teacher knowledge is assessed, and digested, by policy makers and practitioners of ELT in Kuwait. The aim is to bring a personal voice to research on ELT in Arab-speaking, and particularly Kuwaiti, settings. The latter settings are marked with controversy on the general attitude towards English as a communication means and socio-cultural phenomenon.

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: September 2007

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

Policymakers and practitioners (teachers, student teachers). No children are involved.

**Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs)** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

All participants will be given a consent sheet for them to sign and agree upon. They will be approached with respect and all measures for safety and privacy will be taken. All relevant information will be fully disclosed, including my intent, the study's purpose, and participants' privacy rights prior to their signed consent. All participants will be assured of full anonymity and confidentiality.

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

*Interviews* – Details of interviewing will be discussed beforehand in order not to violate the participants concerns for privacy and professional reputation. During the interviewing sessions I will maintain a professional demeanour and attempt to minimise reactions to comments. Upon completion the participants will be able to review drafts of how they are presented and quoted.

*Document Analysis* – When selecting the pool of documents to be analysed (curricular, lesson plans, etc.), I will consult administration of the educational establishment from which participant are recruited to understand power arrangements in the given establishments and negotiate the extent of intrusion into institutional affairs.

All research protocols will be attached to demonstrate that I have not invented or misinterpreted data, and the data have been recorded accurately.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

Interview audio files will be saved onto my personal computer. Access to the files will be limited to myself. The records will be kept on file following the successful defence of the dissertation, at which time all documents related to the study will be destroyed.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

None expected.

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***This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.***

---

**I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

**I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.**

Signed:..........date: 12/12/08.....

***N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor***

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: September 2007

his project has been approved for the period: March 2009

until: March 2010

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Salah Dadi date: 12-12-2008

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.*

SELL unique approval reference: 2/02/08/19

Signed: Salah Dadi date: 12-12-2008  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from

<http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.



## Appendix G

### Interview Sample

#### START OF EXCERPT

- Reem: So you use it as a secret language?
- Noor: I use it with my sisters. I learned it when I was little. My older brother raised me. I told him, "I'd like to talk in English. Could you help me?" He said okay. He bought me some English videos. He said, "Watch them and learn."
- When I was in primary school, I said, "I want to be something big." I tried to learn more and more. Nobody from my family believed I would be something with English.
- When I was in secondary school, I took my sister with me to the English Club at the school. It was enjoyable for me. English is very important for me. Even at first, I'd send messages to Allah in English, not Arabic.
- Reem: You express yourself in English as well.
- Noor: I like to express myself in English more than Arabic. Sometimes when I'm with my sisters I want to express something, but I can't. She said, "You're Kuwaiti. You're Arabian. Use your Arabic language with us." I said, "I can't find the exact words. I have to talk with you in English. You have to accept me."
- My family sometimes doesn't accept me because I can't talk with them in Arabic. Sometimes I speak a little bit in Arabic and a little bit in English.
- Reem: You mix them, even when you speak to people who don't speak English.
- Noor: I think that's the way I am. I can't express a whole sentence in Arabic. When I'm confused, I can't talk in Arabic. I think my mind switched to English.
- Reem: You switch your mind.
- Noor: Yes, I think I switch it.
- Reem: Tell me, how do you see the future of English in Kuwait?
- Noor: I hope it will be good.
- Reem: Do you feel there's going to be more English or less English?
- Noor: I think there will be more English, but they won't use it properly. That's what I think.

Reem: They won't use it properly. Why?

Noor: I don't know. I think some people think English isn't a language. It's an action. They use English.

Reem: For what?

Noor: For example, they use it for clothes and things.

Reem: You mean style?

Noor: Yes, it's to show off their clothes. It's a part of the style. It comes with their style and prestige. I don't like that.

Reem: You think more and more people are using this English.

Noor: Yes, I think more and more.

Reem: Do you think Arabic is being affected by English?

Noor: Yes.

Reem: Positively or negatively?

Noor: Yes, negatively. it's really affecting us badly sometimes. For example, sometimes I can't talk in Arabic, even with my mom. I can't express myself in Arabic. I tell my sister, "Please talk to her. I can't talk in Arabic." I can't express my feelings to my mom in Arabic.

Reem: You went to government school and did all of your schooling in Arabic.

Noor: Yes, but from primary schools, everything I watched was in English. I became obsessed. Even when I curse, I curse in English. My brother says, "Oh my god! Speak to us in Arabic." I say, "I can't."

Reem: Do you think students in government schools should be given the choice of whether they learn English or not?

Noor: No, they have to!

Reem: Why?

Noor: If we give them a choice, they won't take it. Believe me, they won't. Especially in the Bedouin societies, they won't take it.

Reem: Do they need it?

Noor: Yes. In the Kuwaiti society and others, they need it.

Reem: What about in university?

- Noor: They're old enough to decide what's best for them. You can choose whatever you want.
- Reem: In education, do you think there's a balance between English and Arabic?
- Noor: In government schools?
- Reem: Yes.
- Noor: No. I think they focus on Arabic more than English. Even the students don't care about English. I guess I was the only one in my class who was interested in English.
- My teacher was studying, and sometimes she'd make mistakes on the boards. I'd say, "No, this is wrong." She would say, "You don't have to correct me. Nobody objects. It's okay." I said, "No, it's not for them. It's for me. I don't like to see mistakes like that. You're a teacher. You're supposed to do it."
- Reem: You're saying that Arabic is being affected by English, but in schools Arabic is taking too much time and not leaving enough time for English.
- Noor: In education as a process, they don't have a balance. They have to have a balance between, "This is Arabic, a language. This is English, a language." We have to study them equally and use them equally.
- Reem: You think we should use both of them.
- Noor: Yes. I hate to talk in Arabic because they made me talk and write in Arabic. I don't like somebody to say, "You have to."
- Reem: I'm not going to ask you this question because I know your answer. Do you think that all of the courses you take in the college should be in English?
- Noor: Yes. <laughing>
- Reem: Even the non-major courses – from other departments?
- Noor: <laughing> Yes.
- Reem: What are the things in the programme here that you feel aren't useful? In the English department.
- Noor: They're all useful.
- Reem: Do you think it would be interesting to add to the programme examples of teaching English in other countries that learn English as a second language?
- Noor: Yes, I think so.

Reem: Do you think that would be a good idea?

Noor: Yes. Anything that would help us learn more English.

Reem: Do they talk in the programme about the relationship between English and Arabic?

Noor: No.

Reem: Do you think that's important?

Noor: Yes. We didn't take it in our school. We have to.

Reem: You think that would be interesting to add.

Noor: Yes, we should include it.

Reem: Is there anything you feel should be added? Is there a course you feel students should get more exposure to?

Noor: Yes. I think we should study other cultures, as you said. I need a doctor to teach me how to make other people realize the importance of English.

Reem: <laughing>

Noor: Everywhere I go, I hear, "It's not important."

Reem: Tell me why it's important.

Noor: I think it's important.

Reem: Tell me why?

Noor: It's ironic. I haven't traveled in my whole life more than once.

Reem: It was probably not to an English speaking country.

Noor: Right. Sometimes I ask myself why I'm attached to English. I haven't traveled.

Reem: You don't need it for travel. You come from a Bedouin background. All of your family is Bedouin.

Noor: I can't connect with them in English if I talk.

Reem: If you talk, you're like from another country.

Noor: Yes. They reject me because I'm in the English department. My aunts and uncles say, "Don't talk to her. She's American or something. She's free and open-minded." I think, "No, I'm still Bedouin. I have my own traditions. I speak in English, but it's not my lifestyle."

Reem: Do you think there is a link between language a person's identity?

Noor: Yes.

Reem: If language and identity are connected so we change it according to what we're comfortable with?

Noor: No. When I first learned English, it was fun. It wasn't like Arabic.

Reem: Now we're not talking about Fusha. We're talking about Kuwaiti. Kuwaiti is your mother tongue. You're able to express yourself in English but not in Kuwaiti.

Noor: I think I was isolated in my childhood. I focused on my studies.

Reem: You were a good student.

Noor: Yes. I didn't have to talk with my aunts and uncles when they came. I didn't have to visit with them. I didn't use it when I was alone in my home.

Reem: It was your escape.

Noor: Yes, I think it was my escape.

Reem: Are you excited about teaching English?

Noor: Yes, but I'm afraid. I went twice to public schools. One of them said, "Do you use English in your everyday life?" I said, "Yes." He said, "My father said it's not important because I'm going to work in his company. I don't have to learn anything."

Reem: Do you agree with him?

Noor: No! I asked why. I said, "Maybe someone from outside will come here and want to ask you something about your culture or country. He can't talk in Arabic. How will you express to him about yourself or your country?" He said, "My father said it's not important, so we don't have to take it." He said "Take your things and leave." I said, "You're 8 years old." He was very rude and aggressive with his eyes. "My father said we don't have to!"

Reem: That was my question. Do you think he should have the right to choose?

Noor: No, I think we have to. We have to tell the parents that it's important. Someone said it's "haram". I don't think that's proper. Don't think it's connected.

Reem: Do you think Arabic is connected with our religion?

Noor: It is because of the Quran, I think. I study Arabic to read the Quran.

Reem: Is it just for the Quran?

Noor: It's also to pray. In my daily life, I don't use Arabic so much. Now my sister says, "Please, when you're sitting with us, don't talk in English. Try to talk in Arabic. You have to. You're going to get married and have children."

Reem: Do you want your children to speak Kuwaiti or not?

Noor: Yes, but not that much>

END OF EXCERPT

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